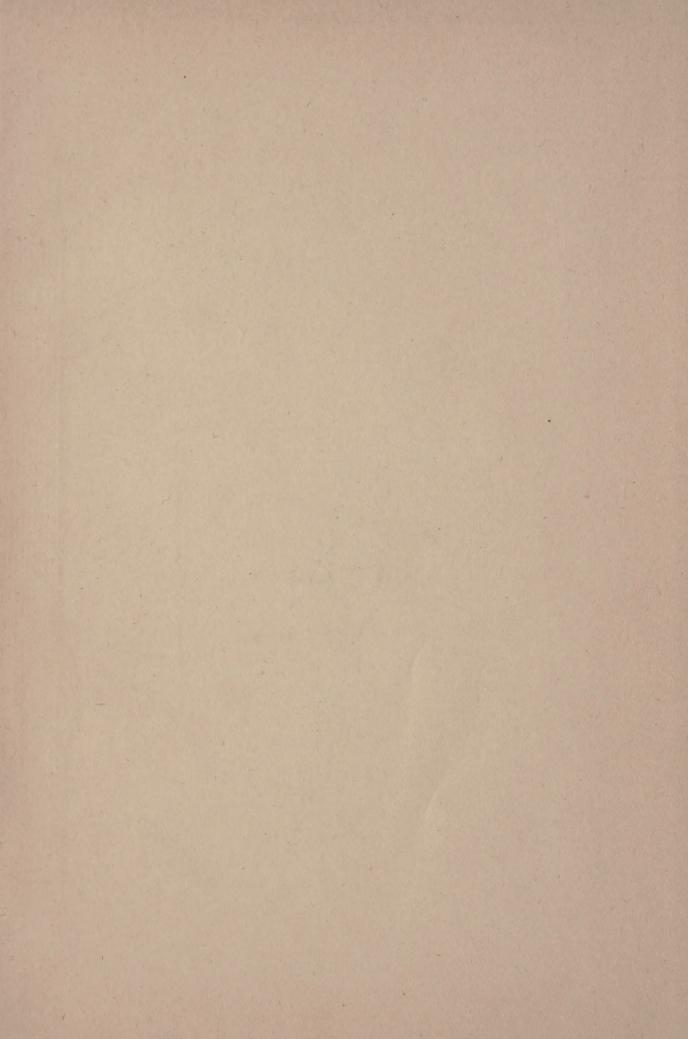


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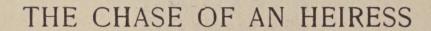
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THE

CHASE OF AN HEIRESS

BY

CHRISTIAN, REID

Author of "The Man of the Family," "The Lady of Las Cruces," "The Picture of Las Cruces" "Valeria Aylmer," etc.

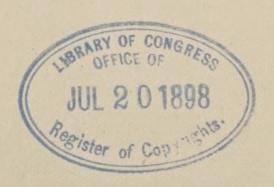
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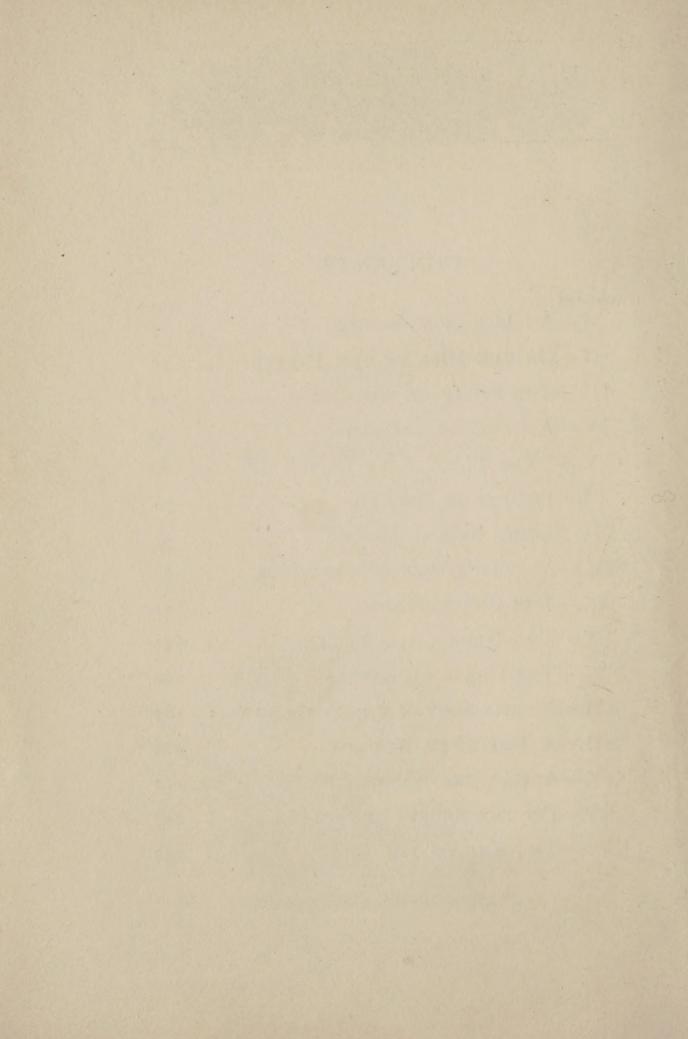
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THE CHASE OF AN HEIRESS

CHAPTER I

AN ISLE OF PARADISE

MORNING in the tropics. To those who have witnessed this daily miracle of nature, no other words can equal these to bring before the mind a vision of radiant freshness and splendour, of everything most entrancing on sea and land, of skies of ineffable azure, of a wide glory of brilliant sunshine, of glittering waves bathing the base of heights crowned with feathery palms, and of distant dream-like mountains wreathed in mists of fairy softness and beauty. This is morning among those "summer isles of Eden" which

we call the West Indies; and pre-eminently so in that pearl of them all, the most beautiful and the most unfortunate, which Columbus named Hispañola—newer, younger, fairer Spain.

It was on such a morning that the Clyde steamer, which makes the circuit of the island before reaching its most famous eastward port, entered the broad mouth of the Ozama River and steamed up to the ancient city of Santo Domingo. There is not in the New World a more striking picture than the approach by sea to this historic spot. The first object which the incoming traveller sees is the great tower or castle known as the Homenaje—the oldest in all America, and one of the finest specimens extant of the architecture of its time-which occupies a commanding position at the mouth of the river, crowning a high cliff of coralline rock, wave-worn and cavernous. Sweeping away from this fortress, to enclose the once famous and important city, are walls mediæval and massive as itself, their battlemented length broken here and there by sentry-boxes and fortalezas, from which the soldiers of Spain

looked forth over sea and land in centuries gone by. And then, as the ship moves steadily onward, up the broad shining current, the entire city of Santo Domingo comes into view, covering the heights within these walls with its great old Spanish buildings and immense masses of ruins, interspersed with modern houses of wood painted in gaudy tints of green, blue, yellow, and red, which, contrasting with the grey massiveness of ancient churches, and with plumy clusters of palms waving everywhere, produce an effect picturesque and tropical beyond description.

But, as the ship draws into her wharf, an object immediately in the foreground of the picture dominates all others, at once by its magnitude and by its associations. This is the ruined palace of Diego Columbus, a grand pile of grey stone, now roofless and falling to decay, but attesting even in its ruin the magnificence which once aroused the jealousy of the King of Spain. Standing on a high hill just within the walls, it overlooks both city and harbour, and must have been an imposing object indeed when the great World-Discoverer's

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ambitious son held splendid state within, and even much later, before ruthless decay and barbarous spoliation had reduced it to its present condition. The encompassing wall is only breast-high on the height, but drops down, sheer and perfect as when its mighty stones were laid, at least fifty feet to the level space of land below between the base of the hill and the river, where it is pierced a little farther along by a gateway, through which all the traffic of the city still flows, as in the days when the Viceroy of the Indies went in and out with glittering train of steel-clad followers.

Leaning upon the top of this wall in various attitudes of indolence on the morning in question were several figures, occupied in watching the approach of the ship as she drew in to the shore. Three or four negro women with sleeves rolled high on their glistening arms, as if they had just turned from unseen wash-tubs, several men who smoked as they lazily reclined upon their elbows, and some children in scanty raiment, made up the fringe of vari-coloured humanity which lounged in front of the once stately palace that stood in yawning ruin be-

hind them—an epitome of the past and present of Santo Domingo. Apart from these groups, yet also looking over the wall down at the incoming ship, were two figures so strikingly different as to arrest attention at once,—a tall, slender man, dressed in light clothes and wearing one of the sun-helmets which are such familiar objects on Englishmen and tourists all over the tropics, and a lady of whom little could be seen except that she wore a sailor-hat and shielded herself from the ardent rays of the sun with a large parasol.

"Those must be Mr. and Miss Chesney up yonder," said a voice, speaking unexpectedly very near a man who was watching these various sights with somewhat languid interest from the deck of the ship. "I'd know his helmet and her parasol anywhere. Yes,"—after a pause of apparently prolonged inspection,—"there's no doubt about them. Here's for a signal."

He waved his handkerchief, and the next moment the salutation received a response. The helmet was lifted and slightly flourished in return. "That's Mr. Chesney," the speaker went on, keeping up a flutter of white cambric. "No mistaking him, or her either. She does n't condescend to take any notice. That's just like her—she's pretty, but disdainful as the devil!"

At this the listener turned around very deliberately and looked at the speaker.

He found him to be, as he imagined, a man whom he had observed during the few days he had been on the ship as a very self-asserting, self-important person, toward whom he had conceived one of those dormant dislikes which only require opportunity to become active. They had not exchanged a word, but this feeling of latent dislike had been mutual. "An underbred cad!" one had thought contemptuously of the other, as he listened to his voice in loud boastfulness at the table and on deck. "An arrogant puppy—confound his superciliousness!" the other had remarked to himself as he passed the long figure stretched out in a steamer-chair, reading and smoking, and betraying only by a glance of his eyes the superciliousness of which he was accused.

There could be no doubt, however, that there was in those eyes at the present moment something besides superciliousness—a light, in fact, of angry astonishment and indignation. The speaker met them full with a gaze of insolent indifference, while he went on talking to his companion, a commercial traveller:

"Know them? Oh, very well. We came out together from New York on the last steamer. I stopped at Puerto Plata, and they came on here. Old gentleman has a fad for antiquities, and wanted to see the oldest city in America."

"If by antiquities you mean ruins, there's a large assortment here to amuse him," remarked the commercial traveller, gazing at some of them as he spoke. "That yonder is the house of Columbus. What Columbus? Oh, the Columbus, I suppose—did n't know there was any other—but you can't prove it by me. Your friends must have taken lodgings up there with the niggers and the donkeys, to be on hand so early in the morning."

"Came to meet the steamer, no doubt," said

the other, complacently. "I mentioned when we parted that I would probably be on the next ship. If they don't come down, I must go and speak to them."

"Well, I'd like to see myself climbing that hill to speak to anybody before I had breakfast," said the commercial gentleman, with energy. "You must be in love with the lady, however disdainful she may be."

"We saw a great deal of each other coming out," was the reply, in that tone of fatuous conceit so common with a certain class of men whenever a woman is concerned. "And it would n't be civil to pass without speaking. No woman likes that sort of thing."

At this point the listener walked away. If he had remained a moment longer he felt that he might possibly push the speaker headforemost over the vessel's side, which was a method of expressing disgust more forcible than desirable. In spite of himself, however, his very air in moving away expressed this disgust, and the other man looked after him with anything save a friendly glance.

"Now what the devil has he to do with it?"

he remarked, irrelevantly, as it appeared to his companion.

"What has who to do with it?" the latter inquired.

"Why, that fellow Leslie—is n't that his name? Did you see the look he gave me a moment ago? What are the Chesneys to him, that he should resent my talking about them?"

"Oh—Leslie!" The commercial traveller glanced after the figure moving away, and shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps he has come out here after them. Nobody knows what his business is. Perhaps"—with a laugh—"they have come down to meet him."

This suggestion was evidently not agreeable to the travelling companion of the Chesneys. "Nonsense!" he said, hastily. "That can't be. It 's not likely they know him at all. I heard them say they did n't know anybody on the island. And he comes from Monte-Cristi, you know."

"You come from Puerto Plata, too, but you don't belong there any more than he belongs to Monte-Cristi. You 've only to look at him to see that."

"I don't care to look at him," said the other, emphatically. "Wherever he comes from, he is made up of equal parts of arrogance and impudence. I'd like a good opportunity to punch his head. His very manner as he walks past one is offensive."

"He is stand-offish," the commercial traveller admitted; "but when I meet men like that —and naturally I meet all sorts, travelling as much as I do-why, I just leave them alone. They don't offend me a particle by their unsociableness. I don't want to associate with any man who does n't care to associate with me."

"D—n association!" rejoined his incensed companion. "I would n't associate with him if there was nobody else on board. But what right has he to resent my talking about the Chesneys?"

Leslie, meanwhile, walking away, said to himself that, since he could not knock the fellow down, he would not remain in his neighbourhood to be irritated by his taking upon his lips a name which he should not have been allowed to mention, which only some chance association of travel could ever have made it possible for him to mention, as an acquaintance. The words he had been forced to hear still rang in his ears, stirring impotent wrath: "Pretty, but disdainful as the devil"-" We saw a great deal of each other coming out "-"No woman likes that sort of thing." And it was Katherine Chesney, proud, fastidious, and disdainful indeed toward presumption and vulgarity, of whom this presumptuous, vulgar cad ventured to speak in such terms! His anger took the form of irritation even against her. How was it possible she had suffered the fellow to know her? he asked, forgetting how difficult it is to avoid such acquaintance on board ship, when the number of passengers is small and association almost compulsory, without downright rudeness.

But, as he walked to the other end of the deck and again looked up at the hill on which stood the old palace, as he saw the figure leaning in the angle of the wall and fancied that even at this distance he could detect the grace and distinction which pervaded it, and which no other woman in the world, at least to his

eyes, possessed in such degree, a thrill passed over him. It was Katherine Chesney herself -and so near! What wonderful, unexpected gift of fortune was this! He had, indeed, sufficient knowledge of the movements of herself and her father to have been aware that they had gone to the West Indies for the winter, but no faintest hope of encountering them in this remote spot had been in his mind as he came upon his own voyage. He would have fancied them perhaps in Cuba, Jamaica, Martinique, but never in beautiful, historic, world-forgotten Santo Domingo. And yet a little reflection told him that it was just because it was beautiful, historic, and world-forgotten that they were likely to care more for it than for any of the more ordinary haunts of tourists. The father a lover of antiquities, the daughter of all things unusual, picturesque, and poetical, it was certain that no spot in the New World would be so attractive, so interesting to them as this, the fair but desolate cradle of its greatness.

And since they were here, since it was certain that they were yonder in his sight, was

he, an old friend of years, to be deterred from going at once to greet them because an insolent stranger had spoken of them with presumptuous familiarity? Such, indeed, had been his first impulse, but he speedily recognised its folly. No sooner, therefore, was the ship made fast and the ladder let down her side, than, without a thought of breakfast, baggage, or custom-house, he hastened ashore and made his way past the modern iron warehouses erected along the wharf, through insistent coachmen and over a dusty road, to the ancient gate with its ponderous arch. Passing under this, he paused and looked around for some avenue by which he could reach the summit of the hill, that now lay immediately on his right. But the approach seemed completely closed by a row of houses, hardly more than huts, which were huddled closely along the side of the street directly within the gate. They were chiefly drinking-shops of the lowest order, for the accommodation (and temptation) of sailors, and over their roofs could be seen the height crowned by its great sombre mass of ruins. But there seemed no passage through

them, and while Leslie hesitated, wondering if he had Spanish enough to make himself understood in asking direction, a door in a crazy wooden erection joining the great city wall swung open, and a boy came leaping out. There was an instant's glimpse of a path within leading upward, which made Leslie eagerly advance.

" Puedo entrar?" he asked, in his imperfect Spanish. "Quiero-what the deuce is goup,' I wonder!-quiero ver la casa grande."

"La casa de Colon?-sí, señor," the boy answered, pushing open the door again and motioning him to enter.

He passed through, and found himself climbing the hill by a flight of ancient, broken steps leading upward along the side of the wall. Impossible not to think how many feet of men in armour had clanked up and down this ascent from the water-gate - soldiers and sailors, companions and followers of the great leaders who had made the world ring with their mailed tread; nay, the very leaders themselves had all, no doubt, mounted and descended along this way.

Gaining at length the summit on which the palace stands, he paused an instant. Nothing could be more melancholy than the picture of ruin and desolation before him; but at the moment the shades of great men and the memory of great deeds faded, as he saw, still leaning on the wall, and now alone, a figure he knew well, and turning toward him a face he would have climbed a far steeper path to behold.





CHAPTER II

ON THE HILL OF THE PALACE

OF Miss Chesney's amazement, when she recognised the man who advanced towards her, there was no room to doubt.

"Mr. Leslie!" she exclaimed, as if she could hardly believe the evidence of her eyes. "Is it possible this is you?"

"As possible as that this is you," he replied, laughing a little as they shook hands. "I was never more surprised than to recognise you up here. I have just come in on the ship below there."

"And you recognised me at that distance? What wonderful sight you must have!"

"Well—ah—I heard a passenger mention your name. But I am sure I should have recognised you if it had not been mentioned.

And yet there is no one I could have less expected to meet."

- "I can echo the remark. There is certainly no one I could less have expected to meet than yourself. Santo Domingo seems very far removed from your orbit."
 - "Why farther than from your own?"
- "Oh, because papa and I, being inveterate globe-trotters, and having visited every place of known interest in the world, are now devoting our attention to seeking out those which are unknown. Hence you find us here."
- "You are to be congratulated on having discovered what you are in search of. Santo Domingo is so far forgotten as a place of interest that I don't suppose it has a visit from a tourist pure and simple once in ten years."
 - "Are not you a tourist pure and simple?"
- "By no means. I will not be rude enough to say, pas si bête. I am here on business."
- "Business!" in a tone which seemed to indicate both surprise and incredulity. "What is it?—sugar, or logwood?"
 - "Neither. My business is—well, we will

call it legal. Perhaps you are not aware that I have an uncle who is a lawyer."

- "I was not aware of it, and I fail to see the connection. I have an uncle who is a bishop, but it does not follow that I am here on ecclesiastical affairs."
- "There is the difference that your uncle has probably nothing to do with your coming here, while my uncle had everything to do with my coming. I am looking for a lost heir."
 - " A lost what?"
- "Heir—person who has inherited, or is destined to inherit, property, you know."
- "Thanks, yes. I understand the meaning of the word. But what has this heir inherited, and why is he lost?"
 - "It 's rather a long story——"
- "So much the better. To meet an acquaintance and find him provided with a long story is wonderful luck—in Santo Domingo. Having been here ten days, I can assure you of that. But we must defer the story for the present, since here comes papa, who started to go down to the ship just before you came up. Whom has he with him? It can't be possible that we

are going to meet two acquaintances in one morning?"

Whom had he with him? Leslie knew even before he turned. Yes, there was his obnoxious fellow-passenger coming around the ruin with Mr. Chesney,—for it seemed there was a different mode of approach from that by which he had ascended,—talking with great animation, and taking off his hat, the moment he caught sight of Miss Chesney, with an air of offensive delight.

"That 's a man who, like myself, has just come in on the steamer," Leslie replied. "He's the person I heard mention your name. We picked him up at Puerto Plata."

From the tone of this last statement, it might have been supposed that the person in question was some kind of an undesirable derelict.

- "Puerto Plata? Oh, I remember him now," said Miss Chesney, as her father approached.
- "My dear," he said, "you have not forgotten our fellow-traveller on the voyage out, whom we left at Puerto Plata—Mr. Stanford?"
 - "Not at all," replied Miss Chesney, as she

held out a slender, gloved hand. "I remember him very well. You stopped at Puerto Plata on business, and thought you might have to go into the interior," she went on, addressing that gentleman, and adding these details as if to refresh her own recollection. "You disliked the prospect of the journey, I remember. Did you, after all, have to go to—what was the name of the place?"

"Santiago," replied Mr. Stanford. "Yes, I went, but was fortunately able to return to Puerto Plata in time to catch the next steamer, by which I arrived here this morning. I had, of course, in view the pleasure of our meeting again," he went on, "but it was an unexpected gratification that my first view of Santo Domingo included a sight of you—and of Mr. Chesney," he added, a little lamely.

"We had not much idea of gratifying anyone's sight but our own, when we decided to
walk here this morning to see the ship come
in," observed Miss Chesney, with a smiling
glance at her father, who had meanwhile been
shaking hands very cordially with Leslie, and
expressing his surprise at seeing him.

"I was just on my way to the ship to see if I could n't get some late newspapers from the officers, when I met Mr. Stanford," he said, "and by his request turned back with him. How on earth did you get here?"

"On the island, or on the hill?" asked Leslie.

"Well, both. You are the last man I should have expected to see on the island, and you must have scaled the wall to reach the hill so soon from the deck of the ship."

"I came up by an ancient, broken stair, straight from the gate," Leslie explained. "So much for the hill. As for the island, why may not I be supposed to possess an interest in historical antiquities, as well as any other man?"

"As a matter of fact, very few men do possess such an interest," replied Mr. Chesney, and from my knowledge of you I—ah—should not have imagined——"

"That I had antiquarian tastes? I am sorry to acknowledge that you are quite right. But I intend to cultivate them; and this seems a very good place to begin."

"On the contrary, a very bad place," said Mr. Chesney, severely. "There is no intelligent interest whatever displayed in the extremely valuable antiquities which exist here, nor even a decent care in preserving them. Look, now, at this ruin—What are you saying, Katherine?"

"I was remarking, papa, that perhaps these gentlemen, since they have been travelling companions only for a short time, may not know each other: Mr. Leslie, Mr. Stanford."

Both lifted their hats—but did not shake hands—with the air of men forced into reluctant civility. Had they been dogs they would, instead, have stiffened their tails and growled in their throats. But dogs have some advantages over men in the matter of the frank expression of their feelings.

"I suppose you are both going up into the city to look for quarters," said Mr. Chesney, in which case you must not allow us to detain you, or all the best rooms—if there are any best—at Felipe's will have been taken by the passengers whom the steamer has landed."

"The friend with whom I parted when I

met you has promised to engage a room for me, so I am quite at ease on the subject," replied Mr. Stanford, with an air of superiority. "Accommodation here, I am told, is very poor, but it does not matter much to me, for I may go into the country almost immediately."

"How adventurous you are!" said Miss Chesney. "We should like of all things to go into the country, but we are informed that it is practically impossible, that travel in the interior of the island is out of the question, owing to the fact that there are no roads. A French gentleman, who had just made a journey across the country on horseback, said to me the other day, 'I assure you, mademoiselle, there were times when I positively wept from the hardships I had to endure.' One must confess that was not very encouraging."

"It is a great disappointment to me," observed Mr. Chesney, "for I had certainly expected, in coming here, to see something besides the coast of the island; but everybody says the same thing. Impossible to go into the interior—impossible to take a lady on such

a trip—no roads, no places of accommodation,'
—absolute barbarism, in fact.''

"Listen to papa talking about 'impossible to take a lady,'—that 's me, you know," said Miss Chesney aside to Leslie,—"when he knows that I never mind roughing, that I am dying to go, and that it is really he who will not face the discomforts involved in such a trip."

"With my recent journey to Santiago strongly in my memory," Stanford remarked, "I cannot but advise you not to think of making such an attempt. The roads—well, it 's impossible to speak adequately of the roads, or rather the trails that do duty for roads. I've no doubt there were better in the days of Columbus. And to hear the reasons the people give for this condition. 'Can't keep up roads here; the torrents of the rainy season wash them away.' As if there were not rainy seasons in Jamaica, and Porto Rico, and many other islands where there are magnificent roads, not to speak of the other end of this island, where the French made such fine highways that they have survived the total neglect and rainy seasons of a century."

"Very absurd indeed," said Mr. Chesney;
but any excuse is better than none, you know, any excuse is better than admitting frankly that the island has reverted to a state of practical barbarism. Not strange, of course, when one considers its history; but very sad in view of its great natural resources, its wonderful beauty and delightful climate."

"I don't know when I have seen a place which charmed me so much," said Miss Chesney, looking with an appreciative glance at the scene which lay around them and taking it in, as it were, in its entirety, from the palm-groves on the opposite side of the river to the fortress at its mouth, and the city lying within the ancient walls by which they stood. "Everything most interesting, everything most romantic in the wonderful romance of the finding of the New World seems to centre here. It is the only place in America where historical associations overpower one. Do you know [addressing Leslie] that the figure of every one of the great Spanish 'world-openers,' as someone finely calls them, meets one here? From Columbus himself, there is not one missing—Cortés, Pizarro, Nuñez de Balboa, De Soto, Ponce de Leon, all have stood where we are standing now, all have sailed out of this harbour below us to discover Mexico, Peru, the Pacific, the Mississippi."

"I did not know it," replied Leslie, frankly.

"The fact is, I know very little about Santo Domingo, except that Columbus discovered it, and founded the first settlement in the New World here. As for the other picturesque gentlemen of whom you speak, I certainly was not aware of their connection with the place."

"You are not much more ignorant than numbers of other people," said Miss Chesney, indulgently. "It is astonishing how little even fairly educated people know of such things. And yet what can be better worth knowing of any place than the historical associations which link it with the past?"

"It strikes me," said Mr. Stanford, with the air of one who intends to be humourous, that its present capabilities of affording comfort are much better worth knowing. These historical associations are very romantic, but they don't make up for lack of the necessities of civilisation."

"I dare say not," said Miss Chesney, regarding him calmly. "There are people to whom the Acropolis would be only a hill of ruins.—Don't you think, by the bye, papa, that we have been long enough on the present hill of ruins? We are certainly detaining these gentlemen from looking after such possibilities of bodily comfort as Santo Domingo affords."

"Not at all, I assure you," said Stanford, while Leslie remained speechless with indignation at being thus bracketed. "Bodily comforts are quite secondary in importance to the pleasure of meeting you. But perhaps it may be better to go down before all the carriages leave the wharf: so I will bid you good-morning. Hope to see you very soon again."

"That," said Miss Chesney, as she watched the dapper figure hastening away, "is a hope which I cannot reciprocate. I find Mr. Stanford inclined to presume very much on slight acquaintance."

"I have been wondering," Leslie could not

refrain from saying, "how you ever chanced to allow him even the slight acquaintance."

"I really forget how it came about," she said, indifferently. "On the outward voyage one was on speaking terms, so to say, with all the passengers. I do not remember much about this man; and he certainly presumes in taking the tone of an old friend."

"He means no harm," said Mr. Chesney, tolerantly. "Men of his stamp know no better. He probably thinks that we are old friends."

"And you classed me with him in your speech of a moment ago!" said Leslie, addressing Miss Chesney in a tone of injury. "What had I done to deserve that? Have I, too, presumed in taking the tone of an old friend?"

"Nonsense!" she replied, laughing. "I could not suggest that he should go—and that was what I meant—without apparently including you. Besides, it was true. You have your bodily comforts to look after also. Is any friend bespeaking a room for you at Felipe's?"

"Assuredly not. I have no friend, and never heard of Felipe's."

"In that case I am afraid your prospects of a lodging are very poor indeed. Papa, what do you say? Had we not better take this friendless wanderer to breakfast with us?—and then you can assist him afterwards in finding a room."

"Of course," said Mr. Chesney. "I was about to propose that. Come along, Leslie. We'll take no denial."





CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF THE QUEST

THERE was not the faintest danger of a denial. Leslie was abjectly glad of the invitation to accompany these friends whom he had so unexpectedly—he still thought so wonderfully—encountered. Mr. Chesney was, indeed, about to temper his sense of his exceeding good fortune by detaining him long enough to reconstruct for his benefit the Casa de Colon, had not Miss Chesney interfered.

"No, no, papa," she said. "You can give him those details another time. I am sure he must be more interested just now in breakfast than in the palace of Diego Columbus. I confess that I am, for an orange and a cup of coffee have not very great sustaining power."

"I am afraid you have no genuine antiquarian enthusiasm, Katherine," said her father, shaking his head. "All you consider is the mere poetical association of things—"

"There is nothing very poetical, but rather extremely practical, about breakfast, papa."

"I was not alluding to breakfast," said Mr. Chesney, a little offended.

He walked on as he spoke, holding his tall, slender figure very erect. He had been in his youth a handsome man, and was still finelooking and what is termed "aristocratic" in appearance, with his clear-cut features and well-preserved, well-groomed air. He had transmitted his clear-cut features and well-setup figure to his daughter, who in process of inheriting these physical traits had seemed to improve and add even more distinction to them. At least it would be difficult to find a more distinguished-looking girl than Katherine Chesney, although many more regularly beautiful might readily be found, while, apart from her striking face or the stately grace of her bearing, there was about her a charm of character, force, individuality, which made her a person impossible to overlook and difficult to forget.

Leslie had reason to be sure on the last point, since he had been engaged for a year in an attempt, which he flattered himself was very resolute, to forget her, and he had now the pleasing satisfaction of discovering that his efforts had been altogether unsuccessful. It needed but one look into her luminous grey eyes, one smile of her lips, to convince him of this, while as she now walked by his side, lithe, erect, incomparably graceful, he was conscious of an elation of spirit which nothing in the situation or his immediate prospects warranted.

They were taking their way across the space of waste, weed-overgrown ground which lies between the wall and the ancient palace. At the back of the last some negro women—the same who had taken a brief interest in the arrival of the ship—were engaged in washing clothes, while the head of a donkey looked pensively from the doorway of one of the lower rooms, converted into a stable. Passing around to the side of the building toward the city, where some fragments of sculpture still remaining over a great archway showed that here had been the grand entrance, they found a row of

huts leaning against the still massive wall, around the doors of which children of various colours and in various degrees of undress were playing, while one or two slatternly women and a soldier in dirty white-linen uniform, who were talking together, paused to stare at them.

"How have the mighty fallen!" said Leslie, falling himself into the commonplace of quotation, which under certain circumstances it is difficult to avoid. "And how deeply Santo Domingo appears to value these relics of antiquity which make evident to all men the historical associations of which you have spoken!"

"Santo Domingo treats them with the indifference that a barbarian naturally feels toward relics of antiquity," replied Miss Chesney. "But I think one has seen the same thing in some other parts of the world with more claims to civilisation than this unhappy island now possesses."

"That is quite true," Leslie admitted.

But is the whole of Santo Domingo either ruinous or squalid?"

"Certainly not. In the centre of the city

are fine old Spanish buildings still intact. We lodge in one of them, built of stone, and solid as the day it was erected. You see, papa and I are such travellers that we have thoroughly mastered the art of making ourselves comfortable, and since life at Felipe's—the best, in fact one might say the only, hotel here—proved altogether unbearable, we rented three furnished rooms, engaged a servant, and set up a ménage of our own."

- "Do you think, then, of staying here for any length of time?"
- "For a few weeks only; but why should one not make one's self comfortable, if it were only for a few days?"
- "I am so far from perceiving any reason why one should not that I would like to emulate your energy, only I do not know if I shall remain here even for so long a time as a few days."
 - "Where are you going?"
- "That I cannot tell until I am able to learn where the person of whom I am in search is to be found."
 - "Oh, your lost heir! You must not forget

that you are to tell me the story. Papa, what do you think has brought Mr. Leslie to Santo Domingo?"

"I really have not considered the subject," replied Mr. Chesney. "It never occurs to me to speculate on the private affairs of my friends."

"Papa, that is a horrid snub, and quite undeserved by me. Mr. Leslie volunteered the information regarding his business—at least, I think you volunteered it [addressing Leslie], but if you did not, it does n't signify. He has come on a search for a lost heir."

"A lost heir to what?"

"He will tell us that presently. Now suppose we take a carriage."—They had by this time descended from the hill to the street leading from the gate.—"The sun is too warm for walking, and here comes one with a horse in passable condition."

The cochero of the carriage in question had already halted, with an inviting gesture toward the empty cushions behind him, and when they entered upon possession of the same, he drove off at a smart pace up the steep street

which lay before them. This street, although lined at first with insignificant wooden houses of modern erection, presently leads into the portion of the city where the ancient buildings spoken of by Miss Chesney exist—stone buildings, dark and time-stained, but of massive solidity, their thick walls, immense doorways, grated windows, carved balconies, and long water-spouts protruding at the eaves like batteries of guns, all recalling towns in Southern Spain, Mexico, and Cuba, and belonging in every detail to the Spanish architecture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

"Yes, it is all immensely picturesque," Miss Chesney agreed, when Leslie expressed himself surprised at the scenes through which they rolled. "It is, of course, very like Spain, with bits that remind one of Algiers and Tunis; and there are some delightful old churches here. The cathedral is very fine."

" Is that a ruin?"

"How exceedingly well informed you are, Mr. Leslie! No, it is not a ruin. It is a noble church in an excellent state of preservation, which contains the ashes of Columbus."

- "I suppose by that classical expression you mean his body."
- "I mean [with asperity] just what I say. Of course those ashes were once his body."
- "I was only about to remark that I had seen that, or at least the place where it is buried, in Havana, when I was there a few years ago."
- "You saw," corrected Mr. Chesney, promptly, "the place where the body of Diego Columbus, which was taken away by the Spaniards, through mistake, for that of his father, is buried. The true body of Columbus is here, and has always remained here. I will take pleasure in going over the proofs for you, if you like."
- "And I will show you his tomb," said Miss Chesney, as if that must be most convincing of all. "Meanwhile, here we are at the Plaza, and yonder is the cathedral."

Their carriage had turned suddenly out of the narrow street along which they had been driving, into a spacious open square lined on three sides by buildings chiefly devoted to government use, and on the fourth by the long fortress-like mass of the cathedral, marvellously quaint and picturesque. Immediately in front of its great doorway, and occupying the centre of the Plaza, an heroic bronze statue of Columbus stands on a commanding pedestal, the figure, admirably dignified and noble, pointing westward.

"You have no idea how impressive it looks by moonlight. Our rooms are yonder, and from the balcony I have a view of the Plaza, the statue, and the cathedral. I will take you over and show you the cathedral after breakfast, if you like."

Leslie was still declaring that nothing could afford him more pleasure than to be introduced by such a guide to the antiquities of the cathedral of Santo Domingo, when the carriage stopped before a house on the corner of a street leading into the Plaza. Descending, they entered under a heavy archway, so large and dark that it appeared almost cavernous, with a flagged court beyond, and, passing up a winding stone staircase at one side, emerged on an upper gallery or corridor running around this court. Here large doors admitted to a

suite of apartments which occupied the entire front of the house. The spacious sitting-room looked as if heat could never invade it, with its lofty ceiling, its tiled floor, and the great thickness of the walls, apparent at the windows, which opened on a stone, iron-railed balcony. The furniture was of Vienna bent-wood, and was scanty in every particular save that of chairs. Miss Chesney laughed as she pointed to the number of these.

"Of course they were arranged in a double row, facing each other, straight down the middle of the room," she said. "They looked so ghostly that I broke up the line at once, and now they look desolate, as if they don't know what to do with themselves, scattered about in what they no doubt consider a shockingly disordered and promiscuous manner."

"I had never imagined before that chairs were endowed with sentiments of propriety," Leslie remarked, as he obeyed an invitation to seat himself, while Miss Chesney, after glancing at a table laid for breakfast in the centre of the room, went out and called, "Antonio!" Then came a sound of fluent Spanish conversa-

tion, followed by that of feet flying rapidly down-stairs, after which the young hostess reentered, announced that breakfast would be served in a few minutes, and disappeared behind the chintz portières which draped the door of her chamber.

By the time she reappeared, her hat laid aside, herself delightfully cool and fresh in aspect, Antonio, a slim, mahogany-coloured lad, fleet as Mercury, had also made his appearance, bearing breakfast.

It was a pleasant little feast which followed, one of those impromptu social occasions which are much more agreeable than any premeditated entertainment. The friends who had met so unexpectedly in this remote spot had many things in common to talk of, and it was not until they had at last risen from table that the subject of Leslie's business in Santo Domingo was again introduced.

"I have not heard that story yet," said Miss Chesney, as she sat down in one of the great bent-wood chairs beside a window and looked reproachfully at Leslie.

"But you shall hear it," he said, only too

glad of any excuse for prolonging his stay. He drew a chair in front of her, disregarding Mr. Chesney's assurance that he might light a cigar,—the room was so large, so airy, and "Katherine did not mind,"—but, leaving that gentleman to smoke his own cigar, while he opened a newspaper which had fortunately been in his (Leslie's) pocket, he addressed himself to the grey eyes that regarded him with such smiling interest.

"I suppose I must begin at the beginning," he said. "Did you ever hear of old David Ancram? No?"—as Miss Chesney shook her head. "Well, millionaires are so common in these days that merely to be rich insures a man no distinction, unless his riches are fabulous. Old David's were not fabulous; but he was very well off indeed, with several millions, and no family to assist him in spending them."

"It is dreadful to think of so much money being wasted for lack of somebody to spend it," said Miss Chesney, feelingly. "Why had n't he a family?"

"Wife died, had no children, and he never tried the experiment again. We may suppose him inconsolable, or we may suppose him disgusted; but he remained satisfied with his investments, his stocks and bonds, until he grew old and infirm, when he summoned a niece to take care of him, and presently died——''

"Leaving his fortune to her?"

"Not at all. Leaving her a trifle of half a million or so, and leaving all the rest of his estate to the heirs of his brother, Thomas Ancram, to whom, he states in his will, he was indebted for his early start and subsequent success in life."

"Gratitude is a very commendable sentiment," said Miss Chesney. "But why should he have waited until he made his will to testify it?"

"That is a question which might apply to many will-makers, but which, not having been honoured with the confidence of the late Mr. Ancram, I am not in a position to answer. Suffice it to say, as story-tellers observe, that the will stands as I have told you, naturally to the great dissatisfaction of the niece——"

"Really [with severity], I think she might be satisfied with half a million."

- "When are people ever satisfied with much when they think they should have more? This lady—perhaps I should say young lady, since she is about thirty-five—is not at all satisfied, but has hopes of still inheriting the whole fortune if the heirs of Thomas Ancram cannot be found."
- "And therefore you have come on her behalf——"
- "Again, not at all. I have come on behalf of the executors, to find, if possible, the lost heir or heirs."
- "But what has become of him, or them? and why should you be conducting your search in Santo Domingo?"
- "Because it appears that half a century ago, just when David Ancram began to mount the hill of success, Thomas Ancram began to descend, and, having met with severe business losses, went to South America to retrieve his fortune by going into coffee. Apparently he did not succeed, for on his death his son drifted to the West Indies, and, varying the family pursuit, went into sugar. He was heard of in various islands, and finally lost sight of in

Cuba, where he lived for some time and married. Diligent inquiry at length elicited the fact that he had, on the death of his wife, left Cuba for Santo Domingo. Beyond that, no information seemed obtainable: so I was finally requested by my uncle to come here and find him, if he is alive, or obtain proof of his death, if dead."

- "And what have you accomplished?"
- "I have found that he is dead-unquestionably dead and buried."
- "Oh!" in a disappointed tone. "Then he will never inherit his fortune, and the niecegrasping creature, I am sure—will get it all."
- " He will certainly never inherit it, but I am not so sure of the niece getting it. He left a daughter--"
 - " Ah!"
- "A daughter who must now be grown, and of whom I am at present in search."
- "Why, this grows romantic!" cried Miss Chesney, with animation. "A daughter, ignorant of the great fortune awaiting her, living in obscurity, young, beautiful perhaps---

- "Or perhaps not."
- "Oh, she must be beautiful. I can't think of entertaining any other idea. Then here are you, young——"
 - " Pray, don't fail to say handsome."
- "Well, good-looking, at least, interesting-"
 - "A thousand thanks!"
- "— to a girl who has presumably never before seen any man of the world——"
- "How much sharper than a serpent's tooth is the unkind sarcasm of one who has no pity for human vanity!" observed Leslie, feelingly.
- "A gentleman," pursued Miss Chesney, remorselessly, "whose fortune does not equal his merits, but who has now an opportunity to appear to the beautiful heiress in the character of deliverer and benefactor, and, winning her heart,—which she will of course surrender without difficulty,—win also the millions which encircle her like a halo."
- "A very pretty romance," said Leslie, as she paused. "It is a pity that it is open to one or two objections: for example, that the lady in question, instead of being a beautiful

girl, may have been married long since to some Dominican and be at present the mother of half a dozen children, or that the gentleman whose fortune is below his merits has no fancy for savages, even though possibly beautiful and certainly possessing a halo of millions."

"How shameful to speak of her as a savage! Why should you do so?"

He made a contemptuous gesture of his hand. "How could anyone be brought up and live here, and be anything else—from our point of view?"

"I don't know what your point of view may be," returned Miss Chesney, "but from my point of view there is no reason whatever for such an opinion. My experience of the world—and I have had a great deal, if travel in many lands can give it—is that very delightful people may sometimes be found in very obscure places. In fact, such people, though they may not possess the surface polish which intercourse with society gives, are often interesting, cultivated, refined—"

"Paragons, in short, produced by a judicious course of plain living and high thinking,"

said Leslie, with an irreverent smile. "There may be portions of the world where such people exist, but I hardly fancy that Santo Domingo is one of them."

- " Pray, why not?"
- "Oh, it is too remote, too world-forgotten, too much given up to half-breeds, despotism, and revolution."
- "None of which causes should make Miss—what is her name? Ancram?—a savage. I hope that you will fall desperately in love with her, and that she will scorn you—there!"
- "You overwhelm me with kindness. But now"—rising reluctantly—"I really must tear myself away. I have yet to look after my luggage, secure some sort of lodging, inquire about my heiress—"
- "All of those things can wait a little," said Miss Chesney. "You forget that I promised to show you the cathedral."
- "I had not forgotten it, but I feared you might be tired. Later, perhaps——"
- "There can be no later for the cathedral. It is inexorably closed for the day after the last mass. We have barely time enough to reach

there before that hour. But fortunately the sacristan knows me-papa and I have been there so much—and if we can get in, there will be no difficulty about getting out. So let us make haste. Papa, will you go?"

"I think not, my dear. I find myself quite tired from our long walk. You can explain to Mr. Leslie all about the tomb of Columbus."

"Yes, I think I could stand an examination on the subject. Don't look so reluctant, Mr. Leslie. It is necessary that your mind should be improved, and that you should understand that Santo Domingo possesses the true and only body of Christopher Columbus. So come."





CHAPTER IV

A CATHEDRAL DRAMA

In extenuation of a delay which he afterward found cause to regret, Leslie endeavoured to picture himself as reluctantly yielding to temptation when he accompanied Miss Chesney to the cathedral. But in point of fact there was no reluctance whatever in his feeling, as he flung all consideration of his heiress overboard without the least hesitation, and, walking with his companion across the Plaza, entered the ancient church.

He was surprised to find the interior of the edifice so stately and magnificent. Nothing that he had seen of the island of Santo Domingo up to this time—that is, the succession of wooden-built towns of the various ports at which the ship he made his voyage upon had touched—at all prepared him for this noble

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church, so vast and massive in its outward aspect, so beautiful and imposing within. Entering by the great western doorway, a nave of grand proportions stretched before them, with glistening marble floor and majestic pillars supporting a finely groined roof. The unexpected effect drew an exclamation from Leslie, but his companion placed her finger on her lip and pointed to a chapel where a priest was saying mass, while a group of worshippers knelt on the pavement before it.

"Don't sustain the character for bad manners in holy places which Americans bear in only less degree than the English," she whispered. "Let us wait until that mass is over. It will not be long, and these people are not accustomed to see tourists walking about the church at such times."

"By all means," assented Leslie, who was not only too well bred to have been knowingly guilty of the bad manners in question, but who, reverence apart, was not sorry to pause for a few minutes and take in the general effect of the noble interior more fully before proceeding to examine its details.

At intervals along the sides of the nave benches of dark carved wood were placed against the massive pillars, and on one of these Miss Chesney sat down, her companion following her example. Farther up the church, divided from them by the width of the nave and the right aisle, was the chapel where mass was in progress. No one noticed them, and they remained silent and quiet for several minutes, Leslie engaged in studying the beautiful details of the chapels, when their attention was attracted by two figures suddenly appearing in the great doorway through which they had entered. A young girl attended by an elderly servant—so much was apparent at a glance. And this glance would have no doubt comprised all the notice that either of them was likely to bestow, had not something a little singular, or at least out of the usual order, taken place. The attendant walked into the church without turning her head to right or left, and, instead of proceeding toward the chapel where mass was being said, at once knelt down within a few feet of the door. The girl paused in the act of entering, and, glancing to one side, seemed to hesitate. But this hesitation was not of long duration. A hand and part of an arm belonging to an unseen person (evidently masculine) outside appeared, seized her by the wrist, and drew her out of sight.

Miss Chesney and Leslie involuntarily glanced at each other.

"Are maidens here liable to be waylaid and captured at the church doors?" inquired the latter. "A step farther and she would have gained the privilege of sanctuary. It seems to be a case that calls for rescue."

"It is a case that calls for the dismissal of that old woman," replied Miss Chesney, looking indignantly at the servant, who as soon as she fell upon her knees had become to all appearances altogether absorbed in devotion. "She has been sent with that girl to take care of her, and this is how she does it."

"She was very careful not to glance in the direction from which that hand appeared," said Leslie, smiling.

"Nor to turn her head to ascertain whether or not her charge followed her into the church," added Miss Chesney. "She is, of course, in the pay of the man outside."

"Do you suppose it is an elopement?"

"Only a clandestine meeting, I fancy. Elopement is not easy here."

"It is evidently the old romance of a forbidden love-affair."

"Yes, if you think there can be romance in deception and double-dealing, which is what such a love-affair generally means."

"How deplorably lacking in romantic sympathies you are!"

"There may be a difference of opinion as to what constitutes romance. The sympathy of the world never seems to me so misplaced as when it is bestowed upon an affair of the kind. Now those two outside yonder are no doubt at this moment violating the trust of others and setting all considerations of duty at defiance."

"You don't know what excuse they may have in parental tyranny."

"I know that in nine cases out of ten the parents are right and the so-called lovers wrong, mere selfish young fools. But see, the duenna grows a little uneasy. Did you observe that glance she cast behind?"

"She thinks the interview is lasting too long. Shall I stroll out, and, by my appearance, startle the lovers into separating? I am afraid someone will see them, and carry the news of their meeting to a hard-hearted parent or guardian."

"Your interest would be touching if one did not suspect that its root is more in curiosity than in sympathy. Confess that you want to see the heroine of this episode more closely."

"And the hero also. I should like to see the form to which that impetuous hand belongs."

"Ah, there it is again," murmured Miss Chesney, who was looking at the door.

Leslie's glance quickly followed hers, and there indeed was the girl once more in sight, and again on her arm, evidently detaining her by a strong grasp, the hand that had drawn her back. There seemed for a moment a rapid, almost fierce, interchange of words—at least the manner of the girl was fierce—then, suddenly tearing herself loose from the hand

which still strove to detain her, she walked quickly into the church and mechanically fell on her knees beside the servant who had accompanied her and who now looked around at her apprehensively.

Nor was she alone in looking. Both Miss Chesney and Leslie stared at the object of their interest, thus brought immediately before them. And both had reason to stare, for a lovelier face, or one more indicative of ungoverned passion, it would have been difficult to find. The complexion, of a fairness quite remarkable for a Dominican woman, was just now flushed with colour which burned like a vivid flame on each cheek; and this, together with the lips of deepest scarlet and the great dark eyes dilated and full of fire, under straight dark knitted brows, gave an impression of possibilities of feeling and action hardly less startling than the astonishing beauty of the countenance—picturesque, vivid, glowing with colour as some rich-hued tropical flower.

"By Jove!" Leslie could not refrain from exclaiming to his companion, in a tone by no means so discreet as it should have been, "what a beautiful girl!—and what a furious passion she is in!"

No sooner had the words left his lips than the girl turned her head and shot at him a glance which, if looks could scorch, might have annihilated him, so blazing was its indignant fire.

"You see," said Miss Chesney, in a tone more discreet than his own, "that she understands English. I think we had better change our places, or I shall have you reduced to a cinder before my eyes. What a passion the girl is in!" she added, as they rose and strolled away. "I don't envy the person who roused it, nor those who have to hold such a fiery creature in check."

"She does not look as if she would submit to be held in check by anyone," said Leslie. "Those lips and eyes indicate a nature so wild, passionate, and headstrong that it would be capable of the most desperate defiance. But there is no doubt of her beauty."

"Not the least," agreed Miss Chesney. "I wonder who she is. Few Dominicans are so fair, and fewer still understand English."

"And I wonder who is the owner of the hand, and what he did to enrage her so deeply. It is a pity that we shall probably never know anything further concerning this fragment of a drama which we have witnessed."

"There is no 'probably about it," replied Miss Chesney, decidedly. "We shall certainly never know any more about it: how could we? But then you can imagine anything you like, and one so romantically inclined as yourself will be in no doubt how to end the drama."

"What powers of unkind sarcasm you possess! But, however romantically inclined I may be,—which is a new light thrown upon my character,—I should be at a loss how to imagine an end to this drama. That girl's passion is of a kind to make or cause tragedy."

"Oh, I don't think so. It is merely the rage of an undisciplined child."

"Undisciplined children grown to woman's estate are often the causes of tragedies."

"Very true. But we will hope that nothing worse than a burst of temper or of tears is impending in this case. And now, if you can divert your mind sufficiently from the drama

and its heroine, we will begin to consider the antiquities which surround us, since the priest has now finished his mass."

Leslie signifying that his mind was sufficiently disengaged for this purpose, and the congregation beginning to melt away, Miss Chesney addressed a sacristan who was starting with a huge bunch of keys to lock the doors of the church, but who obligingly paused to lead them into the *capilla mayor* (or sanctuary) which by royal *cedula* of the Emperor Charles the Fifth was granted as the burial-place of Columbus. Opening a small aperture on the gospel side, he showed, first the empty vault from which the Spaniards imagined that they had removed the great Admiral's bones in 1795, and then the (now also empty) vault where they were so unexpectedly discovered in 1887.

"I wonder if the last really were his remains," remarked Leslie, with the pardonable incredulity of ignorance, as he peered into the narrow dark space where ashes so illustrious had rested unknown and unsuspected for close upon a century. "It seems almost incredible that any mistake could have been possible."

"Not incredible at all," said Miss Chesney.

There is nothing more credible when you hear the details; in fact, nothing more certain. Papa will tell you all about it, and give you any number of pamphlets on the subject to read. But the case lies in a nutshell. It was known that the body of Columbus was here, but there was nothing to indicate the exact place of burial, except a tradition that it was on the gospel side of the altar—"

"Excuse my interrupting you, but surely it was strange that there should have been no inscription of any kind to mark the grave of a man so famous?"

"If you did not interrupt me, Mr. Leslie, I would anticipate your objections. It might be strange, if we did not take into consideration the terrible history of this island, particularly the ravages of the English buccaneers. The pirate Drake, when he sacked Santo Domingo,—one of his cannon-balls, by the bye, is still embedded in the roof of this cathedral,—not only destroyed all records, but desecrated everything holy on which he could lay his hands. It was not to be supposed that he

would spare the graves of the dead: so the archbishop ordered that the tombs should as far as possible be concealed, which no doubt accounts for the fact that there was no inscription, sign, or symbol to guide the Spaniards when they made their search for the body of Columbus."

"It was rather hard on them to have been so deceived."

"It was nobody's fault, and I confess there seems to me a poetical justice in it. I think one may imagine the spirit of Columbus smiling, well pleased, when the bones of his son were borne with great pomp to Havana, while his own remained undisturbed where he had desired they should rest, in his beloved Hispañola. No, I am glad his tomb was hidden, I am glad it is still here. And the Dominicans are glad too. It is said that the people went wild with joy when they learned that the ashes were still in their keeping. Come now and see his present resting-place."

She led the way over to the opposite side of the church, where in the noble chapel of the Adelantado Rodrigo de Bastides, who died military governor of Hispañola in 1527, and there lies interred with his wife and child, are the finely carved doors of the vault in which now rest the earthly remains of the heroic sailor who gave a new world to Castile and Leon and himself died a broken-hearted wanderer.

But the tomb of Columbus is only the first of the attractions of this, the most interesting as it is the most ancient cathedral of the New World. The pages of history are turned back four hundred years as one paces its spacious aisles and pauses at each historic chapel. One would not marvel to meet any figure here, -not Las Casas, the passionate friend and defender of the native races, his worn face full of fiery zeal and ardour under his monk's hood, not the lion-hearted soldier Ojeda, who sleeps in the ruins of the great Franciscan church near by, not Bartholomew Columbus, who gave the city that name which the whole island now bears, nor yet the mail-clad conquerors of Mexico or Peru, such soldiers of fortune as the world has never seen before or since. These and unnumbered others are the figures with which fancy fills the great spaces, while the

eye is resting on richly carved and gilded altars, on paintings by Murillo and Velasquez, and on ancient tombs covered with heraldic carving.

"And now," said Miss Chesney at length,
"we must not trespass longer on the patience
of my excellent friend, the sacristan, although
I have no doubt he would courteously wait for
hours if necessary. What shall you give
him? Oh, a peseta, if you like."

From the fervour of the sacristan's " Muchas gracias, señor," and the lowness of his bow as he ushered them out of the door, which he immediately locked behind them, it is to be supposed that something larger than the peseta recommended found its way into his palm, but, whatever it was, Leslie felt as if his benediction might accompany it to one who even indirectly had aided in giving him the pleasure of the last hour. Leaving the tempered light of the cool church and stepping into the brilliant tropical sunshine and tropical heat outside proved, however, a salutary measure toward bringing his mind back from the contemplation of the past to the business of the present. With a murmured apology he glanced at his watch, and was astonished to find how much of the day was gone.

- "I am afraid I have detained you too long," said Miss Chesney, catching his surprised exclamation. "You must excuse me."
- "Excuse you! Why, I owe you a thousand thanks for a most delightful morning," he replied, with evident sincerity. "I don't know when I have enjoyed anything so much. But I must now go and begin inquiring about my heiress."
- "Where are you going to make your inquiries?"
- "My first step will be to seek a man who, I am told, can give me the information I desire. I was assured at Monte-Cristi, where I stopped, the last news of Ancram having come from there, that, Ancram himself being dead, the best person to give me news of his daughter was a German merchant here in Santo Domingo, named Herresdorf."
 - "Did Ancram die at Monte-Cristi?"
- "No, he died at Santiago, in the interior; but I did not think it necessary to go there, since I met a man who was with him when he

died, and who promised to obtain all the certificates for me."

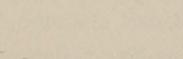
They were walking slowly across the Plaza as he said this, and when he finished, Miss Chesney suddenly stood still.

- "Santiago!" she repeated. "Is n't that where Mr. Stanford said he had been?"
 - "Yes, I think he did say so. Why?"
- "Because a thought has struck me. What is his business here, do you know?"
- "I have n't the least idea. I had never spoken to the man before you introduced us."
- "And, now I remember, nobody else knew—on the ship, I mean. Mr. Leslie, I am sure that man has come out here to look for the Ancram heir also."
- "Oh, that 's impossible; he could n't, you know. Who would send him? I'm the only agent the executors have sent."
 - " Might n't the niece have sent him?"
- "Why should she send him? It is most distinctly not to her interest to look up the heir."
- "N-o-but- However [walking on brisk-ly], all this is mere speculation. Go and see

your German merchant, and please remember that I shall be much interested in hearing the result of your inquiries. I think if I were in your place I would go to him at once."

"I am going to him at once. Don't be afraid [with a laugh]: I have no intention of inflicting myself upon you any longer."

"I should not allow you to do so [very coolly], but you may come to dinner at six o'clock this evening, if you like, and be sure to bring me some news of the heiress. Now here is my way, and there is yours. Hasta luego."







CHAPTER V

"THE BOATS HAVE LEFT"

It was about an hour after he had parted from Miss Chesney that Leslie found himself before the house to which he had been directed as that of Mr. Herresdorf. It was one of the old Spanish buildings, and when he passed through a lofty and massive doorway and turned to the right he found himself in what was apparently a counting-house, but which, owing to its thick walls and grated windows, was so dark to eyes fresh from outer sunshine that he could for a moment distinguish little beside the figures of two or three men seated at desks. One of them, a slender, good-looking young fellow, rose and came to meet him.

[&]quot; Buenos dias, señor, said Leslie, hesitatingly. "Señor Herresdorf, está en casa?"

"You wish to see Señor Herresdorf?" asked the young man, in good English, though with a foreign accent.—"Father"—he turned around as he spoke—"here is a gentleman asking for you."

There was a sound very like a grunt, but probably a German ejaculation, from a remote part of the room, and the next moment an elderly man of rotund figure, wearing spectacles, and of unmistakably Teutonic appearance, came forward.

"Good-day, sir," he said, also in excellent English. "You wish to see me?"

"Yes," Leslie answered. "I am the bearer of a letter for you from Mr. Neidermeyer of Monte-Cristi." And he offered the letter as he spoke.

Mr. Herresdorf ejaculated, "So!" received, opened, read it, and glanced curiously at the bearer. Then, saying, with more politeness, "Come this way, if you please," he led him back to the end of the room whence he had emerged, gave him a chair beside the desk from which he had arisen, and seated himself directly before him.

"I learn from this letter," he then said, that you desire information concerning the daughter of Carlos Ancram."

"I came to the island to look for Charles Ancram himself, and, stopping in Monte-Cristi, where he was last heard of, I learned that he had died in Santiago several years ago,"—Mr. Herresdorf nodded,—"that his widow married again,"—Mr. Herresdorf again nodded,—"and that she had, with her second husband, gone to Santo Domingo City, taking the daughter of Ancram with her."

"Who is not her daughter, you understand," said Mr. Herresdorf.

"Who is not her daughter, I have understood," replied Leslie, "but only a stepdaughter whom she has retained in her charge."

Mr. Herresdorf nodded yet again. "A kind act on her part," he observed, "for the girl has not a penny of her own."

"Good actions are sometimes rewarded very unexpectedly," said Leslie. "The girl, if she is indeed the child of Charles Ancram,—which fact, I presume, is susceptible of proof,—will soon possess more pennies of her own than she will know what to do with."

- "So!" The spectacled eyes beamed upon him with a strong accession of interest. "She has inherited something?"
 - "A fortune of several million dollars."
- "Gott im Himmel!" exclaimed the German, relapsing in his astonishment into his native tongue. "You are sure of this?"
- "If she is the daughter of Charles Ancram, I am perfectly sure of it."
- "Oh, she is his daughter," said the other.
 "There is no doubt of that. But I never heard of any expectations: the father, poor Carlos, died in miserable poverty. How does this come about?"

Leslie told him briefly—a recital to which he lent a most attentive ear—and then begged for information concerning the whereabouts of the girl.

"Yes, yes, I shall give you full information," replied Mr. Herresdorf. He paused, however, and seemed to ponder deeply, until, as Leslie, growing impatient, was about to speak again, he lifted his head and fixed him

with his bright, keen glance. "But first," he said, "kindly give me a little information. Have you any connection with the gentleman who has already been here this morning on the same errand?"

Great as was Leslie's astonishment at this question, it was not so much astonishment for the fact communicated as for the apparently striking verification of Katherine Chesney's intuition. For who could this inquirer have been save the man she suspected?

"Has anyone been here on the same errand?" he asked. "You surprise me greatly. It was no one of whom I have any knowledge. What kind of person was the—gentleman?"

Mr. Herresdorf turned over some papers, picked up a card which lay on his desk, and handed it to Leslie. "Robert Stanford" was written on it.

"She was right," Leslie thought. "But what possible object can the man have?" "I know the person bearing this name," he said to Mr. Herresdorf, "only because we were fellow-passengers on the ship which arrived here this morning. My acquaintance with him is of

the slightest, and I had not the least suspicion of his business. Nor, indeed, for that matter, have I now. I represent the legal adviser of the Ancram estate, and am here for the purpose of discovering and communicating with the heir or heirs of David Ancram, deceased. Whom this person represents, or why he should be interested in the matter, I do not know. Did he inform you?"

Mr. Herresdorf shook his head. "He did not speak to me of representing anyone," he said, "nor did he mention any inheritance. He simply asked where he could find the daughter of Charles Ancram, and I told him."

"You did tell him?"

"Yes. Why should I not?"

Unable to say why he should not, Leslie gazed at him in silence for a moment, conscious of a deep sense of vexation, difficult to express in words. Mr. Herresdorf, after waiting an instant for his reply, proceeded:

"I knew no reason for refusing to do so, although the request surprised me very much. For, you will understand, the girl has been a

very insignificant person up to this time. Pretty, yes—people who think of such things regard her as pretty—but a penniless orphan, supported by the charity of her stepmother. That is not one for whom strangers are likely to come making inquiries. So I was surprised; but I thought, 'Ach, no doubt he has seen her and liked her pretty face, and if he means well, why should I not help the girl to a chance to settle in life?''

"But did not the thought occur to you that this man, a stranger to you, might *not* mean well?" interrupted Leslie, rather sternly.

The German shrugged his shoulders. "She has those whose duty it is to take care of her," he replied. "It is not my duty. That was what I thought."

"But you perceive now that you have probably opened the way for a designing adventurer, who has learned of her inheritance, to reach her and impose on her ignorance alike of life and of her own good fortune," said Leslie. "I think, sir, that as the friend of her father—I presume you were his friend—you might at least have paused before you gave the ad-

dress of a young girl to a man of whom you knew nothing."

"And so I would," returned the other, coolly, "had I guessed the truth. But how could I guess? It occurred to me that it would be a very good thing if Felisa were taken away from Santo Domingo, where she has no family, and where she might perhaps do much mischief; and so I made a mistake. But it is, happily, not a mistake of great importance. It has not been two hours since this Mr. Stanford was here, and-Otto!" He turned suddenly around in his chair and called the name sharply. One of the young men at the other end of the room, but not the one who had met Leslie, rose and approached. "Go," said Mr. Herresdorf, speaking rapidly in Spanish, "to the house of Doña Maria Estragués, and discover if her sister-in-law Doña Lucia and Felisa Ancram have left there. Also, in case they have left, ascertain if anyone called to see them before their departure."

"St, señor," the young man replied, seized his hat with alacrity, and left the room.

"And now, Mr. Leslie," said the merchant,

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turning back, "would you object to giving me a few details about this inheritance while we wait Otto's return?"

Leslie, aware that there was no reason whatever for concealment, gave him all the details he desired, and added that he was empowered to make any financial arrangements which should be necessary for the immediate passage to the States of the heir or heirs of Charles Ancram.

"And this reminds me to ask," he added, "were there no children of the second marriage?"

"Two," Mr. Herresdorf answered, "but they are both dead. Felisa, the only surviving child, is the heir, unless indeed the wife-"

Leslie shook his head. "A dead man cannot inherit." he said. "Had Charles Ancram survived his uncle even a day, his widow would be entitled to a share of the estate. But he has been dead, it appears, for five years."

- " For at least five years."
- "And David Ancram died only last year, bequeathing his property to the descendants

of his brother Charles, of whom it appears there is but one, this girl—how do you call her?"

- " Felisa."
- "Who therefore inherits the whole estate."
- "And its value is-"
- " Not less than four or five millions."
- "Gott im Himmel!" said the German again, and then relapsed into silence and apparently profound thought.

Leslie did not care to break either the silence or the meditation, and so they remained for several minutes longer, until the young man called Otto re-entered, as hastily as he had left, and addressed his employer:

"They are gone, señor. Doña Maria says that they have been gone at least an hour. And a stranger—the gentleman who was here this morning—called just before their departure, and has accompanied them to Rosario."

"What!" Mr. Herresdorf almost bounded from his chair. "He has accompanied them! God! what fools women are! Run, Otto, to the river. Perhaps the boat has not yet gone. If not, tell Gomez to wait until he hears from me: bid him on no account to leave."

"What is it?—what has occurred?" asked Leslie, who had not understood a word, when, with another "Si, señor," the young man again vanished.

The German told him what had been said, adding: "You cannot regret more than I do that I should have given this man the information he asked, for I believe now that he has some sinister object in view. But who could have imagined that Doña Lucia would be such a fool as to suffer him to accompany her to Rosario!"

- "Remember that Doña Lucia is presumably ignorant regarding the millions," said Leslie, with a sarcasm which he did not attempt to restrain. "What is Rosario?"
- "It is the estate of which Estragués—the man who married Ancram's widow—is manager. It belongs to a rich Cuban."
 - "And where is it?"
- "On the Ozama River, half a day's journey above here."

[&]quot; By steamboat?"

"There are no steamboats on the Ozama. By the boats which come down loaded with sugar and are towed back by a steam-tug."

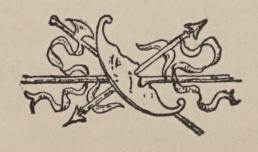
"And it is in this manner that these people have gone at present?"

"Yes, if they have gone at all. I hope that they may not yet have started. There is generally much delay in the departure of these boats—in fact, in everything in this country, as you have no doubt already observed. But it will serve us well at present, this habit of delay—"

"I would be willing to wager a good deal," said Leslie, "that on this occasion the boat departed promptly on time."

He proved to be right. A few minutes later the breathless messenger again returned.

"The Rosario boats left as soon as the ladies went down, señor," was his report. "They have been gone an hour."





CHAPTER VI

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

"I SUPPOSE," said Leslie, when he met Miss Chesney in the evening, "that you share the common trait of human nature in liking to be proved right in your judgment and conclusions?"

"Can you doubt it?" she replied. "Does not everyone like to be proved right? But, according to papa, I like it particularly well."

"Then I am glad to have some pleasant intelligence to communicate to you. You were right in divining the business which brought that fellow Stanford to Santo Domingo."

"Ah! He has come after the heiress, then?"

"He has not only come after her, but he has so far the advantage of me that he has found her."

- "Found her! Where?—how?"
- "Where? Here in Santo Domingo. How? By the use of that peculiar diligence which is commended to us in the maxim that 'it is the early bird which catches the worm.' Mr. Stanford was the early bird in this case, and he successfully caught his worm—that is, the heiress—while I was studying the antiquities of the cathedral this morning under your able guidance."
- "Oh, Mr. Leslie, I am so sorry! It was my fault that you went there."
- "Not at all. You must not think so for a moment. No doubt [mendaciously] I should have gone whether you had kindly proposed accompanying me or not. You see, I had not the faintest idea that there was any occasion for haste. How could I possibly imagine that the girl was here in Santo Domingo this morning, or that she would leave before I could obtain her address?"
- "Has she gone? But in that case Mr. Stanford——"
 - "He has gone with her."
 Miss Chesney collapsed in her chair. "Good

heavens!" she murmured. "Tell me all about it."

By the time he finished his story, she was again sitting upright with bent brows, giving her whole mind to consideration of the situation. "What are you going to do?" was her first question.

"By Mr. Herresdorf's advice, I am going to follow her to this place called Rosario—a sugar estate up the river. I was at first inclined simply to send a messenger with a letter; but he urged me so strongly to go in person that I have yielded to his advice. He blames himself severely for having given Stanford the information he sought,—in fact, he seems terribly concerned about it,—and is very anxious that the truth shall be made known to the girl and her guardians as soon as possible."

"Do you suppose Stanford has not made it known to them?"

"We are in absolute ignorance of how much Stanford knows, or what his intention may be in seeking the girl. We can only suppose he is an adventurer who, having learned of her inheritance, has found some plausible pretext for making her acquaintance, his object being to marry her."

"There is nothing more likely. It would certainly be the object of an adventurer; and in that case he would not tell her of the fortune until he had accomplished his end."

"That is what Mr. Herresdorf thinks. You should see the distress of this worthy German. Not for the girl, you understand—the girl, he admits, he considered of no consequence whatever, and without hesitation gave her address to this stranger—but for the millions! 'Five millions!' he repeats, as if the mere words fascinate him. 'And I gave that scoundrel a chance to secure them! Oh, my good sir,'—this pathetically to me,—'why did you not come to me without delay!'"

"Mercenary old wretch!" said Miss Chesney. "I have no sympathy for his distress. But he is right in so far that the delay was unfortunate, since it enabled the man to steal a march on you in this manner. How do you suppose that he learned anything about the heiress or her fortune?"

[&]quot;I can throw no light on that. It seems

pretty evident, however, that he has learned the facts of the case, for the journey to Santiago certainly implies, as you suggested, that his business on the island, like my own, was to find the heirs of David Ancram. But whether he represents anyone, or is merely an adventurer anxious to obtain some hold upon the girl before she knows of her good fortune, it is impossible to say. I incline to the last opinion."

"But he could hardly have come out from New York with that idea in his mind, since the journey to Santiago also implies that, like yourself, he was looking primarily for Charles Ancram. There he found the record of his death and learned of the existence of the daughter. Then it is possible that other views and intentions may have developed themselves."

"All that is probable; but then what prompted him to come in the first place?—by whom could he have been sent?"

"You were not born for a detective, Mr. Leslie. In order to answer that question, is n't it necessary to ask another? Who, be-

sides David Ancram's executors, has any interest in finding his heirs?"

"Nobody that I am aware of. As I remarked when we were talking of the matter before, the niece, who inherits in default of them, has considerable interest in their not being found. She would never send in search of them, depend upon it."

Miss Chesney laughed. "And have you never heard or read of people who sent in search of others whom they did not wish to be found—in order to put them out of the way?"

"Good heavens!" said Leslie, hastily, "I must have given you a very bad idea of this poor woman if you think her capable of planning murder——"

"Oh, the stupidity of men!—that is, some men," cried Miss Chesney, impatiently. "Did I say anything of murder? Is there no other mode of putting people out of the way? Can't you bribe them?"

"Easily enough in most cases. But what bribe could outweigh a fortune of millions?"

"Mr. Leslie, I really think that your uncle displayed very little knowledge of your character—of the guileless inability to entertain suspicion which apparently distinguishes itwhen he sent you on this errand. Naturally no bribe could outweigh a fortune of millions, if the people to be bribed were to know anything about the millions. But let us suppose a case. A person inherits a comparatively small portion of a large fortune, and will inherit the great remainder if certain missing heirs cannot be found. It is therefore to her interest, as you have observed, that those heirs should not be found. What does she do, therefore, granting that she is an unscrupulous person?—and unscrupulous persons unfortunately abound in this world. Why, she sends a secret messenger to the place where the heirs were heard of last, with directions to find out if they are alive or dead, and if alive to contrive means to remove them to some remote spot where the inquiry for them would never come to their knowledge. That," said Miss Chesney, calmly, " is what I should do if I were dishonest and in the position of this woman of whom we speak."

"It is a plausible theory," Leslie agreed; but really I have no reason to believe the

woman dishonest in any degree, much less so desperately unscrupulous as such a plot would demand that she should be."

"Have you any reason to believe her honest?"

"Well, no. But the maxim of the law is that a person must be supposed innocent until proved guilty, you know."

"The law," responded Miss Chesney, scornfully, "does not act very consistently, then, in arresting people and subjecting them to imprisonment and disgrace before they are tried and found guilty at all. But if you believe the woman innocent of any plot, how do you account for the presence here of this man?"

"I don't pretend to account for it. But I have n't the least reason to connect her with his presence, you know."

"You had n't the least reason to connect his presence in the island with the Ancram heirs when we talked of the matter before, you remember. But there is nothing to be gained by discussing something which we don't know and can't prove. The point is, what are you going to do?"

"As I have mentioned, Mr. Herresdorf is strongly of opinion that I should go in person to Rosario to communicate my important intelligence. And I suppose he is right."

"Of course he is right. Since you let the girl slip through your fingers here, you are bound to follow her and defeat the object of that man who has gone with her, whatever it may be. I cannot imagine why you are not on fire to go, when you consider that he is no doubt at this moment playing the part which fate clearly intended for you."

- "And that part is——?"
- "To win the heiress and her millions, beyond doubt."

She spoke with the most positive decision, but was angrily conscious the next moment of flushing under a look which, without need of words, recalled many things to her recollection that she had no desire to recall, and under the influence of which her readiness of speech for once failed her. To her great vexation, she was unable to think of anything to say until Leslie spoke—very deliberately:

"It is kind of you to place me in the same

category with Mr. Stanford. But what have I ever done to lead you to credit me with so much—shall we say, worldly prudence? That is the euphemism generally used for mercenary scheming, I believe."

"Mercenary scheming! I should call it very romantic to find a beautiful girl, endowed with millions, and marry her."

"Then your sympathies ought to be strongly enlisted in behalf of Mr. Stanford, whom we suspect to be acting (according to that view) in the most romantic manner possible."

"And I don't promise that they will not be," she cried, with still more heightened colour, "if you continue to put so little spirit into your part. Mr. Stanford may be an adventurer, a fortune-hunter, but he is at least a man who knows how to seize opportunities with energy, and to take with a strong hand what he wants."

"Oh!" said Leslie, still looking at her with provoking intentness; "that, then, is your idea of what a man should be? I know some women are fascinated by the knock-down-and-bear-off mode of wooing; but I hardly im-

agined that you would be one of them. I am always glad of a new light on character, however. Thanks for this on yours."

"And thanks for so kindly comprehending me," she replied, her eyes flashing with anger. "As if to commend energy and the resolution and daring which generally accomplish their end was the same thing as to approve what you call 'the knock-down-and-bear-off mode of wooing'! I am sorry you are so obtuse, Mr. Leslie—if indeed you really are."

"I don't think I am remarkably obtuse," said Leslie, with a dispassionate air. "I believe I grasp your meaning. You are commending energy, daring, and resolution (whether unscrupulous or not) as qualities specially adapted to win the feminine heart."

"Naturally [curtly] a woman is more likely to believe in a devotion which expresses itself in that manner."

"See, now, how one can be mistaken. I should have fancied that some women—not all, by any means—would appreciate more highly the qualities of modesty, deference, and a chivalrous desire not to exercise com-

pelling force of any kind upon what should be a gift free as heaven's light, or which else is of no value at all."

Again Katherine Chesney flushed, and her vexation was not lessened by feeling that she had been betrayed into discussing a subject which was the last she desired to touch upon with this man, and that in the discussion she had through impatience expressed an opinion which was by no means hers, but which she now disdained to modify or retract. It was a distinct relief that her father at this moment created a diversion by entering the room.

"Papa," she cried, quickly, "what do you think? Mr. Leslie has lost his heiress and must go in chase of her."

"Chasing an heiress," said Mr. Chesney, smiling as he shook hands with Leslie, "is not at all an uncommon amusement—or should one say occupation?—but this chase will have some elements of novelty. How have you managed to lose her? I thought she was yet to be found."

"In a certain sense she was lost before she was found. And in fact she is not yet found

—by me," replied Leslie, somewhat ruefully. And then he explained.

Mr. Chesney listened with much interest,—an interest decidedly quickened when he learned that his late fellow-passenger was the mysterious and perhaps sinister element in the loss,—and fully agreed with Mr. Herresdorf that it was Leslie's manifest duty to follow the girl, in order to communicate the news of her great fortune without delay, and frustrate the designs of a man who, there was every reason to fear, was a scheming adventurer.

This was fully discussed at the dinner to which they then sat down, and presently Mr. Chesney asked by what means he intended to go to the estate called Rosario.

"There is but one means, apparently, of going," Leslie replied, "and that is by the river. I spoke of hiring a boat to take me up. But Mr. Herresdorf would not allow me to do so. He says that the boats of the estate are now coming down constantly with sugar,—towed by a steam-tug which takes them up and down,—and that the best and quickest way for me to go is with them. He is certain that one

or two will be down to-morrow, and that I can return with them the next day. I have been considering whether you and Miss Chesney might not perhaps like to make the trip. I know that you are anxious to see something of the interior of the country."

"Why, yes," said Mr. Chesney, looking a little surprised, "we are certainly anxious to see something of the interior of the country, and going by water would obviate the objection of the bad roads. But—ah—you see, Leslie, you are not exactly in a position to invite us to accompany you. You are going by private conveyance to a private house."

"I have ventured to speak of the matter to Mr. Herresdorf, who, as the agent directly representing the owner, may be considered the master of the house," replied Leslie, "and he says that there is not the least objection to your going. In fact, he will be delighted if you will do so, and, instead of merely giving us a letter to the manager of the estate, he will send his son to introduce us and see that we are made comfortable. I really think," glancing now at Miss Chesney, "that you

might enjoy it, since you are fond of new scenes and experiences."

"I am sure of it," said the young lady, with the most promptly cordial assent.—" Papa, it is a chance we could not have hoped for. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Leslie for thinking of it, and I am in favour of accepting his offer at once."

"If this Mr. Herresdorf represents the owner, his permission should be all that is necessary," said Mr. Chesney, hesitating a little, but evidently much tempted.

"That is his position," said Leslie. "The manager is directly responsible to him, and very likely appointed by him. I can see that he has control of everything, and I am sure his invitation is sufficient. The only question is, would you like to go?"

"The answer to that is very easily given," said Mr. Chesney. "We should certainly like very much to go, if proper arrangements can be made."

"Will a formal invitation from Mr. Herresdorf come under the head of 'proper arrangements'?" asked Leslie. "I took the liberty

of settling with him that it is to be offered by his son, who will meet me here to-night. I hope "—he spoke to Miss Chesney—" that you will not think I presumed in making such an appointment without first obtaining your permission?"

"On the contrary," she said, "I think you have been planning for us in the kindest possible manner, and we have reason to be very grateful to you for thinking of the matter. It is just what I have been wishing for—an opportunity to go into the interior of the country. And to go now, with the additional interest of the romantic circumstances surrounding your quest, I think will be delightful."

"I perceive," said Mr. Chesney, "that the decision is taken out of my hands."

"And don't you like decisions, and all the other troubles of life, to be taken out of your hands?" laughed his daughter, as they rose from table. "Confess that you would not miss this for anything."

"I will first hear what young Mr. Herresdorf has to say," was the guarded reply.



CHAPTER VII

LIGHT ON THE DRAMA

THE last words had hardly been spoken when Antonio appeared in the doorway opening upon the gallery-encircled court and announced that a señor was below inquiring for Señor Leslie.

"That," said Leslie, "is of course the young man of whom we have just been speaking. Have I your permission to bring him up?"

"Antonio will do so," replied Miss Chesney; and, addressing Antonio, she added at few words in Spanish, on which the youth, with a prompt "Si, señorita," disappeared, returning in a few minutes followed by the person for whom he had been sent, and whom he ushered into the apartment.

A gentleman, there was no doubt of that. Katherine Chesney, whose intuitions on this point were unfailing and of lightning-like quickness, decided as much as soon as her glance fell on the graceful young figure which advanced into the room. "What a charming boy!" was her thought — a thought which would certainly not have taken form in her mind had not her fastidious taste been as much pleased by his air and manner as her eye by his handsome face. For there was in his appearance no sign of the Teutonic father. From the Spanish blood of his mother had come to him the slender grace of his form, with its delicate extremities and lines so finely moulded that awkwardness of movement became impossible, and the picturesque beauty of his Southern face, olive-skinned, delicate-featured, darkeyed. It was a face singularly attractive in the open frankness of its expression, with a smile which gained a flashing quality from the kindling light it awakened in the eyes, and the regular whiteness of the teeth it displayed.

This smile appeared as he caught sight of Leslie, who came forward to meet him and at once presented him to Mr. and Miss Chesney. In a few minutes they were discussing the expedition which Leslie was anxious for his friends to join.

"And why not?" asked young Herresdorf, who spoke English with only such slight foreign accent as added to its charm, inasmuch as it was derived from the noblest and most musical of all languages, the Spanish. "If you would like to see something of the interior of the island, why not accompany us?"

"We should like very much to do so," said Miss Chesney, frankly; "but we feel a hesitation in going uninvited to a private house—"

"My father, who represents the owner, has sent me to invite you," said the young man. "And even if it were otherwise, no one in Santo Domingo would think it strange that you should go. We have not very much to offer, perhaps, but hospitality is the law of our island. When you have left the towns you find no—how do you call them?—houses of public entertainment at all. You must either repose yourself under the trees or in a private house. It is expected."

"That indicates a very fine spirit of hospitality in the people," said Miss Chesney, smiling. "And we are exceedingly obliged to your father for his kind invitation. But we should be a large party, and to go in this manner, altogether unexpected, would probably be to give a great deal of trouble and inconvenience to the people of the house where we are bound. You see, I have been so long a house-keeper myself that I know what it is to have unlooked-for guests on one's hands."

"Ah," said the young man, with one of his flashing smiles, "the cases are different. You would expect to do much for your guests of which Doña Lucia—that is the wife of the manager of the estate—would never think. She will simply give you what she has, and of what she has not she will not trouble herself. If there are not beds enough for us all, Mr. Leslie and I will take some hammocks, hang them up, and sleep in them very well indeed. So pray do not hesitate, but come."

"In that case," said Katherine, looking at her father, "I really think we may permit ourselves the pleasure of going—eh, papa?" "I suppose we may," answered Mr. Chesney, "since you are so anxious, and Mr.—ah—Herresdorf is so kind. When do you expect to go?" asked he, addressing the latter.

"We hope to go day after to-morrow," was the reply. "The Rosario boats will be down to-morrow with sugar for the Clyde ship which is loading here at present; and we will return in them the day after."

Miss Chesney glanced at Leslie. "That means," she said, "that the man who has gone in advance of you will have three days in which to pursue his plans, whatever they may be, before you can reach him."

"Very true," Leslie answered, "but there is no remedy that I perceive. And after all, you know, I have really no concern with the movements of Mr. Stanford. He may have no such plans as we credit him with; or, if he has, it is no affair of mine to frustrate them. My business here is simply to find the heir of David Ancram and communicate to her the news of her good fortune."

Miss Chesney regarded him with undisguised scorn. "You have no energy, no spirit of ad-

venture, no—no romantic ambition," she said. "You might as well be a mere lawyer's clerk."

- "Which is really what I am for the time being," he replied, calmly.
 - "And the beautiful heiress?"

He looked at her steadily. "The beautiful heiress, after I have conveyed the news of her inheritance to her, is a person with whom I am not at all concerned."

- "You are hopeless! you are incorrigible!" She turned her back upon him, to give further point to her words, and addressed the young Dominican, who had meanwhile been talking with her father.
 - "Mr. Herresdorf."
- "Señorita?" he responded, turning toward her.
- "I wish you would tell me something about this young girl who has suddenly become the possessor of such a large fortune. What is her name?"
 - "Felisa, señorita."
- "Felisa! How pretty, and how singularly appropriate to her present circumstances! Of course one might moralise about the dangers

and temptations of wealth; but I prefer to think of the intoxicating delight of finding one's self suddenly possessed of five millions while still young, beautiful—she *is* beautiful, is she not?"

It was a simple question, but the young man's face flushed in answering it.

- "She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, señorita," he replied.
- "I fancied she must be beautiful," said Miss Chesney, with the air of one whose wisdom is justified. "And is she very young?"
 - "Only seventeen."
- "Happy girl! What vistas of pleasure are opening before her!—No, papa, don't shake your head. I can't possibly moralise over her. I can only think of being seventeen, and beautiful, and having five millions. Fancy what her life would have been on this island had she remained poor and obscure, and what it will be now!"
- "She would probably have been a happier and a better woman had she never inherited such a fortune," said Mr. Chesney, dogmatically.

"How can you know that? And why should wealth necessarily be a demoraliser? I don't myself believe that it is. It must be a very poor character that is injured by the possession of means for happiness and culture and doing good. Think of the horrible helplessness and narrowness of poverty—how it cripples the faculties, embitters the nature, and rends the heart! Could any effects of wealth be worse than these? And if one has ambition, as everyone should have,"-here she glanced again at Leslie,-" wealth can make its gratification possible. And so I feel that the beautiful and happily named Felisa is to be most heartily congratulated, and I refuse to think of her as an object of compassion at all."

"She will certainly be an object of compassion if she becomes the prey of a fortune-hunter, and it is more than probable that she will," said Mr. Chesney.

"I fail to see why even that is necessary," his daughter began, when Leslie interposed.

"Mr. Chesney is quite right," he said. "I may be old-fashioned, altogether out of date, but I have so great a contempt for the man

who plays the part of fortune-hunter—that is, who seeks and marries a woman for her money—that I hardly think a worse fate could befall her than to become the prey of such a schemer."

"You are out of date," said Miss Chesney.
"You belong in a pastoral. We have outgrown those ideas; for how would rich women marry at all if it was necessary for them to be convinced, as a preliminary, of the disinterestedness of their suitors?"

"Character is the only test," said Leslie, rising. "There are men whom it is impossible to suspect of such motives; and a woman must be wilfully self-deceived who does not know when she is really loved, and when merely sought, no matter with what degree of simulated ardour."

"We are great fools sometimes, you know," said Miss Chesney, candidly.

"Not such fools as to be unable to tell that, if you choose to do so," he answered. Then, taking her hand, he said good-night. "Mr. Herresdorf and I will talk over the details of our expedition," he added, "and I will let

you know to-morrow if any change in the programme is decided upon."

When they had passed out of the great dark portal of the house, Leslie offered his companion a cigar. "Let us sit down in the Plaza, if you have nothing better to do," he said. "The night is too beautiful to put a roof over one's head any sooner than must be."

The young Dominican assenting, they walked over to the Plaza and sat down on one of the stone benches. There was no music this evening, and therefore there were no promenaders nor any loiterers besides themselves. The statue of Columbus had all the silent square and the ineffable beauty of the tropic night to itself. The moon riding high in the violet heaven was lightly obscured now and then by white scudding clouds, which threw their delicate shadows over the heroic figure of the great discoverer and the fortresslike mass of the ancient cathedral. There was a moment's silence after the two men sat down. Leslie was gazing at his surroundings with a sense of deep satisfaction in their picturesque antiquity, when his companion spoke.

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"It is quite true," he observed, abruptly, what the young lady—how do you call her?"

" Miss Chesney."

"Yes, Miss Chesney, said. It is a wonderful good fortune which has come to Felisa, who has now all the world before her, to do what she will, to go where she will, and to have all she wants. And Felisa wants much—very much."

"You know her well, then?" asked Leslie, interested.

"So well, señor, that I do not think anyone could know her better. I have known her ever since she came here, a mere child. And I have been thinking it is also true what you were saying about the fortune-hunter, how no one is more contemptible than the man who seeks a woman for her wealth, and no one is more to be pitied than the woman who becomes his prey. But, señor, tell me,"—and the handsome young face gazed at him very earnestly—"do you think that a man who had always loved a woman, who loved her long before she became rich, would be a fortune-

hunter if he sought her after she had inherited a fortune?"

"No, certainly not," replied Leslie, with decision. "He only is a fortune-hunter who seeks a woman for her fortune and not for herself. But in your case—I mean the case you have put—there could be no question of such a thing, since he loved her before she had become rich. To avoid all danger of doubt on her part, it is to be hoped that he told her so."

"Many times, señor. For I do not wish to make any mystery with you, and, as no doubt you guess, I am speaking of myself. I have always loved Felisa, and she has always known it. But my father was desperately opposed to our marriage and positively refused his consent—for which he is very sorry now."

"No doubt," said Leslie, dryly.

"And, since I am dependent on him, there seemed no alternative for us but to wait. Only last night—does it not seem strange?—only last night I implored him to give even a partial consent, so that I might have at least the right of seeing Felisa openly, for, by his request, her stepmother had forbidden her to see me; but

he would not yield. He forbade me ever to speak to her again. In that I had no intention of obeying him, for I was resolved to marry Felisa whenever I was able, but there seemed no hope for us at the present time. I felt bound to tell her so, when we met by agreement to say farewell before she left this morning. And then she was angry—very angry."

"With your father?"

"Yes, and also with me. Her position is not a happy one in her stepmother's family, for, although Doña Lucia is kind to her, she is sheltered, clothed, and fed by the charity of those to whom she does not belong, and her pride feels it keenly. She had looked to me to release her from this position, and when I told her that it was impossible for me to do so until I could render myself independent of my father—which I promised, however, to spare no effort to do—she was indignant and said some very bitter things."

"Very unreasonable ones, too, I am sure," said Leslie. "My dear Mr. Herresdorf——"

"Ah, if you please, call me Ramon," interposed the young man. "I cannot feel that

you are talking to me when you address me as Mr. Herresdorf. No one ever calls me so."

"Ramon, then, with pleasure. Do you know that you interest me extremely, and I am delighted to have come as the deus ex machina to clear the way of your romance? I only wish I had arrived yesterday."

"So do I, with all my heart," said Ramon, with a sigh. "For Felisa went away angry—so angry that she would not listen to me, nor even look at me."

"Why did n't you force her to do so? Sometimes it is necessary to assert yourself with a woman before she will respect you."

"The place forbade it, señor. We met at the cathedral door yonder—for she made an excuse of desiring to hear mass before leaving the city—and when I tried to make her listen to me she broke away from me and went into the church. I could not follow her there. It would have been to make a scandal."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Leslie. He took his cigar from his lips and stared at his companion. "So it was you!" he said.

"It was I, yes," the other answered, un-

comprehending. "Who else could it have been?"

"And the girl who was in such a passion—Oh, I see it all now!" Leslie cried. "Why could n't I see it at the time? Why on earth did n't some instinct tell me that the person I had come to Santo Domingo to seek was within three feet of me? But catch an instinct behaving in a sensible, serviceable manner like that! Oh, confound it all!"

"I—don't understand," said his companion, staring in turn. "Were you in the church?—did you see Felisa?"

"I saw her, and I also saw—hold out your hand for a moment. Thanks, yes—that is the same hand which tried to detain her. Well, all that I can say is that your inamorata has a fearful temper."

"She has a temper," confessed the lover, and perhaps what you would call a violent one——"

"I do call it so, most emphatically. I don't think I ever saw anyone in such a rage as she was this morning."

"She was very angry," Ramon admitted.

"That is what I told you. And when Felisa is angry she is—how do you say?—desperate. She will stop at nothing. It is that which makes me uneasy."

"But what do you fear? What can she do? You are not afraid of her drowning herself?"

"No, I am not at all afraid of her drowning herself; but I am afraid she will have nothing more to do with me. Her last words were: I will never speak to you again. I will help myself, or I will find someone else to help me, since you do not love me sufficiently to do so."

"Most abominably unreasonable and selfish," said Leslie, "but probably of no more weight than this." And he blew out a light cloud of cigar-smoke.

"Perhaps not, if this money had not come," said the young man, as he watched the light curling rings dissipate in the air. "But now, how can I go to her, now that she is rich, with the memory of those words between us?"

"My dear boy," said Leslie, kindly, "the whole matter in my opinion resolves itself into the question, does this young lady love you,

or did she only desire to make a convenience of you, to escape from the disagreeable conditions of her life? If the first, her fortune will only smooth the path of her love; if the second, you should congratulate yourself upon escaping her, if she had twice five millions."

"I believe that she loves me," said the other, simply. "I cannot doubt it. But I fear that she doubts my love, that she thinks I was not ready enough to brave my father on her account. And then her pride was all in arms—I have told you she is very proud—at being rejected and despised. Now it will be her turn; now she can reject and despise both my father and myself; and, señor, I fear, I greatly fear that she will do it."

"Then I repeat that you will be well rid of her," said Leslie, who was dimly conscious that he was not playing the part of confidant with very delicate sympathy. "A woman who is possessed of a perfect devil of a temper and pride to match would be a terrible companion for life, no matter if she were beautiful as Venus and rich as Crœsus."

"It is perhaps too much to say that she is

'possessed of a devil of temper and pride,' señor."

"Not a bit," said Leslie, positively. "I shall never forget her face this morning, nor the look she gave me—never. You are a brave man to think of undertaking such a termagant, no matter what her charm. But if she loves you, the five millions will not change her; and if they do change her, she has never loved you. That is how the matter stands."

"Yes," agreed the other, dejectedly, "that is how it stands."





CHAPTER VIII

AT THE TOWER OF COLUMBUS

"SINCE we cannot start on our expedition until to-morrow, can't we go somewhere to pass the time to-day?" asked Leslie, when he met Miss Chesney the next morning. "There must be some more ruins and antiquities to see."

"What an intelligent antiquarian interest you manifest!" the young lady laughed in reply. "Yes, unfortunately, ruins abound in Santo Domingo, and one has only to choose among them. Would you like to visit those of the great church and convent of San Francisco on the hill near the Casa de Colon?—or do you care to see the remains of the first university established in the New World?—or will you make an expedition with papa and myself

of the river? I want to get a good photograph of the remains of the tower in which Columbus was confined, for you know it is a mistake to suppose that he was confined in the castle here, which was not built at that time."

"I did n't know it," Leslie confessed, as humbly as befitted his ignorance. "I am sure the castle here looks old enough for anything; and everybody points it out as the place where Columbus was imprisoned."

"'Everybody' simply repeats, parrot-like, what was originally said by ignorant people. The castle is nearly four hundred years old—it was built about the year 1509, after the settlement was removed to this side of the river—but it is not old enough to have been the place of Columbus's imprisonment. That occurred in 1500, if you remember "—Leslie endeavoured, not very successfully, to look as if he remembered—" while the city was yet on the east bank of the river. He was confined by Bobadilla in a small tower over there, which from that event was called the *Torrecilla de Colon*."

"It must be immensely interesting," said

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Leslie, "and I shall be delighted if you will allow me to accompany you. When do you start?"

"As soon as papa, who went out a few minutes ago, returns. We shall take a carriage, for it is quite a distance to the site of the torrecilla, and also lunch, so we need be in no haste to return. Since your heiress is unhappily out of reach, I suppose you do not object to a day of idling."

"Object!" There was not much indication of objection on his face. "I am very much obliged to the heiress for being out of reach. Idling—with you—on the ancient site of Santo Domingo is just now my idea of everything most desirable."

Miss Chesney shook her head. "That is not the spirit you ought to have," she said. "But here comes papa, so I will go and prepare the lunch."

An hour later the little party of three had left the grey walls of the city behind them, had crossed the river by means of the modern bridge which spans it, and were driving toward the ancient site where Bartholomew Columbus founded the second settlement in the New World—Isabella, on the other side of the island, having been the first—where his great brother ruled as Viceroy of the Indies, where the usurper Bobadilla came with power to depose him, and where he, who had given a new world to Castile and Leon, was ignominiously imprisoned, before being sent in chains to Spain.

All of this, with many particulars, Mr. Chesney poured into the ear of his companion as they drove along, and if that ear was somewhat unheedful the fact was hardly surprising. The divine loveliness of the perfect day and the picturesque beauty of the surrounding scenes, together with the magic of a pair of radiant grey eyes, a flashing smile, and a musical voice, were distractions which hardly allowed Leslie to give the attention that was justly due to the old tragedy of human ingratitude and injustice.

On the extreme point of the eastern bank of the river, where reaching the ocean it unites its waters with the wide, sparkling expanse of a sea all lapis lazuli and silver, are to be seen

the remains of the tower where the supreme height of that tragedy was reached. A few scattered stones are all that now mark the spot on which history and local tradition are alike agreed as the place of Columbus's imprisonment. Very soon, with the neglect which Santo Domingo accords to all her relics of the past, even these will disappear, and there will be nothing to tell that here the heroic heart of the great Admiral tasted more than the bitterness of death, that here his sad eyes gazed from a prison cell out over the entrancing brightness of the tropic sea of which he was the discoverer, and that here he received, as the reward of all his services, those chains which he ever afterward kept beside him, as a perpetual reminder of the vanity of human greatness and the ingratitude of human hearts.

"I wish it were a better ruin," Miss Chesney sighed after she had taken her photographs. "It does not make a very effective picture, but then it is *the place*, and that is the important point. And perhaps, after all, it is not to be regretted that the memorial of such an event should be obliterated."

"It is very much to be regretted," said Mr. Chesney. "There is no excuse for such barbarous neglect of the antiquities of the island—none."

"Only the excuse of its history," said his daughter. "When one thinks how it has been swept by fire and sword, ravaged by buccaneers, pillaged by pirates, made a battle-ground of Spanish, French, and English, one wonders that *any* antiquities survive, that a single stone is anywhere left standing upon another."

"It is of course necessary to take that into consideration," Mr. Chesney admitted. "The chapel, on the steps of which Bobadilla read the proclamation deposing Columbus, is near here, and in a tolerable state of preservation," he added, addressing Leslie. "You will like to see that."

"Oh, certainly," responded the young man, with every appearance of interest. He turned to Katherine. "You are going to see it?"

"I have already seen it," she answered, but—yes—I am going there to take some photographs. There is no need for haste, however," she added, as she sat down on one

of the rocks which formed the foundation of the tower, and looked beyond the ring of flashing surf to the marvellous sea stretching to the limitless horizon. "This place is full of sadness, yet it fascinates me. I find it hard to tear myself away from it. The voice of the waves seems to have here a more minor tone than elsewhere, as if it were repeating the story of the ingratitude of the world and the transitoriness of its honours."

"It is a story as old as the world," observed Mr. Chesney, dryly. "When you have finished meditating upon it, you will find me at the chapel. There are some details I want to examine and make a few notes of."

He walked away, and Leslie, after hesitating a little, sat down beside Miss Chesney. At the present moment he, too, was conscious of a fascination in this spot, which was not perhaps altogether due to the memory of Columbus, although his thoughts were busy with that memory as he, also, gazed out silently over the boundless, glittering expanse of sapphire sea.

"It is certainly a case of poetical justice if the body of Columbus is here—honoured in the place whence he was banished in disgrace," he presently observed, reflectively.

"There is no possible ground for doubting that the body of Columbus is here," Miss Chesney replied, with emphasis. "And we must not forget that the government of Spain disavowed Bobadilla's acts. It is also pleasant to remember that speedy retribution overtook him."

"Nevertheless, the obvious and only possible amende to Columbus, of reinstating him in the viceroyship of the Indies, was not made," Leslie returned. "In short, the whole thing was what our English friends would call a beastly shame."

"I am sorry to perceive a great tendency to levity in your remarks," said the young lady, reprovingly.

"It all happened so long ago!" he murmured, apologetically. "We may imagine that even to Columbus it seems a small affair now, or the only important thing in it the effect it had upon himself. That, we may believe, was salutary. At least, what we are told of his always keeping his chains with him seems to prove as much."

"Salutary, perhaps—but very sad."

"Ah, if I wished to be pessimistic, I should say, what is not sad in human history? But I don't want to be pessimistic. Here, in the glad light of this beautiful day, I would prefer to forget the wretched story, with all its disheartening lessons, and think only of how delightful life can be—under some circumstances."

"Mr. Leslie, I am afraid that you are very——"

"Shallow? Don't hesitate to say it. If depth is synonymous with melancholy, I think I prefer to be shallow."

"If you were in earnest that would be a very unworthy choice, but I did not intend to say that you were shallow. I had quite another word on my lips."

"May I not hear it, especially if it was a little more flattering?"

"Oh [rather hastily], it was not of any importance. Since you are not interested in Columbus, suppose we talk of your heiress."

"My heiress, as you are kind enough to call her, interests me even less than Columbus. But I must tell you that I have had a new and rather strong light upon her character. Do you remember the drama which amused us in the cathedral yesterday—the girl and the hand, you know?"

"Of course I remember. How could I forget anything so interesting? You don't mean that you have any further light upon it?"

"I have the fullest possible light upon it. The girl was the heiress of whom I am in search, the happily named Felisa—"

"Mr. Leslie!"

"And the hand was that of our young friend, Ramon Herresdorf."

Miss Chesney seemed for a moment wavering between amazement and incredulity. Then she said, "Are you sure of this?"

"Perfectly sure. The party of the second part opened his heart to me last night, and, quite unsolicited, told me all about it."

"And what was the meaning of the scene?"

"Just what we imagined. A clandestine meeting of lovers between whom intercourse had been forbidden, a stern and mercenary father in the background absolutely refusing consent to their marriage, a headstrong, unreasonable girl desiring her lover to accomplish impossibilities and leaving him in a furious passion, with the assurance that she would have nothing more to do with him, because he represented to her that living on air was, even in Santo Domingo, a slight impossibility. Voilà tout!"

"And that was Felisa! How strange that you should have met her and been so close to her—the very person of whom you were in search!"

"It is certainly most unfortunate that she was not ticketed in some way. I begin to think that a law requiring every person to wear a badge with his or her name upon it would be a good thing. I'll present the idea to some aspiring legislator when I go home."

"What a rage she was in!" pursued Katherine, paying no heed to this frivolous remark.

"I never saw anyone more angry, nor a face more indicative of undisciplined passion. I am afraid she is not very happily named, after all.

Not even five millions can insure happiness to

one possessing such a temper. But she is wonderfully beautiful."

- "So is a tigress, but one would not care for her as a companion. I suggested as much to young Herresdorf."
 - " And he___ "
- "Is in love. That says everything, does n't it? And, being in love, he is much disturbed over the five millions complication."
- "Then he is a remarkably unworldly young man—almost too unworldly to be believed in."
- "What a deplorable cynic you are! But you do him injustice. He does not profess such extreme unworldliness. On the contrary, I suppose he would be as pleased as is natural to humanity over the prospect of so much money, if in coming just at this time it did not render his position a little awkward."
- "I cannot imagine why, since he was in love with the girl, and she knew it, before the money was dreamed of by either."
- "Ah, but remember the scene of yesterday. I am afraid you do not understand its full significance. That passion which we beheld, that volcanic rage, was provoked by his refusal

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to disregard all considerations of prudence and by an immediate marriage to release the fiery young lady from a painful position of depend-Also her pride was intensely wounded by his father's absolute refusal to sanction an engagement between them. The end of the matter was that, closing her ears to his reasonable arguments, she left him in the manner we saw, declaring that he did not love her, and that she would find someone else to help her. Can you not fancy that, after this, he feels the fortune to be something of an obstacle between them? Fate, you see, has given her the opportunity to say: 'Yesterday you would not help me; to-day I do not need your help. Yesterday your father did not think me good enough to be your wife; to-day I do not consider you good enough to be my husband.' That is what he fears to hear from her."

"Remembering her face, I cannot doubt that it is very likely what he will hear," said Miss Chesney. "But everything depends upon whether she really loves him or not."

"So I told him, adding that if she had only wished to make a convenience of him he would

be well rid of her, especially since no amount of wealth could compensate for such an infernal temper."

"You seem to have been very sympathetic. And so, I presume, in view of this complication, and of the 'infernal temper' besides, you have given up the romantic part to which I assigned you?"

"If it were possible for one to give up what he has never undertaken, I should say yes. But, if you remember, I replied to your kind suggestion by stating that I did not find in myself any inclination to play the romantic rôle in question."

"It is a pity," said the lady. "It seemed to arrange itself admirably. The idea of your coming here to find a young and beautiful heiress—for I was right about the youth and beauty—and not marrying her is an absurd anticlimax. I suppose I shall now have to transfer my interest to Mr. Herresdorf."

"Why not to Mr. Stanford? There is a man after your own heart, prompt, energetic—By Jove! I did n't think of it before, but if he has the intention with which we are disposed

to credit him, fate has played into his hand with a vengeance. Supposing that his intention is to marry the heiress before she hears of her good fortune, he finds her ready, moved by anger, disappointment, and wounded pride, to accept any hand which is held out to her."

"Why do you say that? She may be angry with her lover, and yet not ready to accept another man in order to——"

"Spite him? She surely will. Again, remember that face yesterday. It was the face of one ready for any desperate deed."

"Then why [turning upon him] are you idling here, instead of taking young Herresdorf and flying to her rescue? If I were in your place and thought that, I would not waste an instant. She is only a child, after all, and to let her ruin her life, so full of bright possibilities, by marrying a scheming adventurer, will be shameful."

"Well, you see," replied Leslie, very deliberately, "I am not equipped with a pair of wings, and consequently I cannot possibly fly to her rescue. And, short of flying, there is no way of reaching her. Besides, marriages

are not usually made up in such hot haste. They only met yesterday morning, so that, however ready the fair Felisa may be, they can hardly be married before we reach Rosario to-morrow."

Miss Chesney regarded him with a glance which was expressive of exasperation in the highest degree.

"I cannot imagine," she said, "how it is possible for a man to have so little energy as you possess. It is no wonder—"

"Go on," said Leslie, as she paused. "It is no wonder—"

"That you have never done anything in life, I was about to say," she answered. "But that is very rude, and I beg your pardon. I have no right to criticise your character or modes of action."

"Inaction, you mean, I fancy," he replied, quietly. "And, waiving the question of a right to criticise, you are right. It is no wonder that I have never done anything in life, nor so far won anything worth winning. As a matter of fact, very few things in life appear to me to be worth any exertion, and those

which are worth every exertion seem to be beyond the reach of exertion to attain. Yet I really believe I am capable of energetic action should a need for it arise. Show me, for instance, how to win your favour,—which so far has been one of the things beyond the reach of exertion,—and, if necessary, I will go out and tilt at windmills."

"Tilting at windmills would certainly not be a means of winning my favour," said she, flushing slightly. "I am not so foolish. And I really had no intention of giving the conversation such a personal turn. Let us return to our sheep —that is, to your particular lost sheep, Felisa. Do you think young Herresdorf is very much attached to her?"

"Very much, I think. He has certainly given every proof of it, short of the insane one she demanded."

"Then I formally transfer to him all right, title, and interest in the part which I vainly assigned to you. And I sincerely hope that he will put some spirit into it."

"It is more than probable that he will. Do you know, by the bye, that your going with

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us may be of infinite service to this poor girl? Where her lover's influence might fail to defeat the schemes of Stanford,—since we are to continue to credit him with schemes,—your influence, as that of a woman belonging to the world she is about to enter, may be powerful to succeed."

"You are possibly right," said she, thoughtfully. "A woman, especially a woman of the world,—and I suppose there is no doubt of my being that,—may have more influence than a lover with whom she is incensed, over this passionate, undisciplined nature. Especially she would be likely to give to my opinion of Stanford a weight which she would not give to his. Yes, I see what you mean, and I am glad it is decided that we are to go with you. The story is an interesting one, the situation exciting. I want to see the end—and perhaps help to make it the right end."

"You will be an invaluable ally," he said, looking with admiration at her bright, determined face.

"I really do not think I am an ally to be despised," she agreed, smiling. "And I am

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wonderfully pleased at the prospect of seeing something of the interior of this romantic and almost unknown island. In fact, I am afraid that I am selfishly glad that your heiress ran away, and that you must give chase to her."

"I am very sure that I am glad of it," Leslie said, candidly. "It is such good fortune having your companionship that for me she cannot run too far or too long—that is, if your zeal in the chase would not become exhausted."

"Mine would not, but I could not answer for papa's, so we will hope that we shall find her at Rosario. Now, speaking of papa reminds me that we must not keep him waiting longer at the chapel. Bring the camera and let us go."





CHAPTER IX

THE CHASE BEGINS

In expecting to leave the next day on the search for his heiress, Leslie had reckoned without a knowledge of Santo Domingo habits of delay. That the sugar-laden boats from Rosario did not arrive at the time they were looked for surprised no one but himself, and that the process of unloading them after their arrival was most unduly prolonged proved more of a trial to his patience than even to that of the captain of the steamer. It was two days later than the time first appointed when the welcome intelligence came at last that the boats were ready to start on their return voyage, and the party assembled for departure.

Empty now, except for some stores which Mr. Herresdorf was sending to Rosario and

the very light luggage of the travellers, the great boats lay in the stream, awaiting the little steam-tug which was taking its human freight at the wharf. Miss Chesney's face seemed to reflect all the radiance of the perfect day when she made her appearance, together with her father. Her attire of duck skirt and blouse of soft, cool India silk was just what the expedition called for, and she herself was so fair, blithe, and charming that Mr. Herresdorf, who met her for the first time, was quite overcome by her beauty, and bestirred himself in an unexampled manner in ordering the arrangements for her comfort. Moreover, he took occasion to say to her much what Leslie had expressed the day before.

"I regard it as a very happy thing for this girl who has so unexpectedly inherited a great fortune," he said, "that she should be brought into association with a lady who belongs to the world she is now to enter, and who will be an object-lesson to her of what she should become."

Miss Chesney smiled. "Without flattering

myself that I am very effective as an objectlesson," she replied, "I hope that I may be of some service to this young lady, whose life is about to undergo such a sudden and great transformation. I confess that I am immensely interested in her. The story is like a romance: one is full of expectation as to what the heroine will do."

It was evident from the involuntary change of Mr. Herresdorf's countenance that he was in a state of not altogether agreeable expectation as to what the heroine would do.

"H'm—yes," he said, hesitatingly. "The story is a good deal like a romance, but I wish we had known of this inheritance a little earlier. It would have prevented much—er—trouble, for the girl is of a disposition difficult to calculate upon. Had I known it only a few hours earlier, I should not have given information concerning her to a man who, I fear, is a scheming fortune-hunter."

"What else are you, mercenary old wretch!" was the very uncomplimentary mental comment of Miss Chesney. But she said aloud: "Oh, I hope we are going to defeat his

schemes, and bring the heiress back with us in triumph. We have good reason to hope so, since I am informed that there is an attachment of long standing between her and your son."

"Of long standing certainly," Mr. Herresdorf assented, "but—ah—unfortunately I have hitherto been obliged to oppose it, owing to the fact that neither of them was in a position to think of marriage. Now, of course, matters are entirely changed. But we don't know how she will regard them."

"We 'll hope for the best," said Miss Chesney. "I must believe that romance will carry the day. You see, I have quite fallen in love with your son myself——"

"He is deeply honoured," said Mr. Herresdorf, bowing.

"So I can't imagine the girl he is in love with resisting him."

"I hope that you are right," said the father, very sincerely; "but she has, I regret to say, an extremely violent character."

"If it is violent in one respect it will probably be violent in another," said the young lady, with cheerful optimism. "Oh, I am

sure everything will end as it should, and I promise you that I will do my best to bring about the proper ending."

"We are indeed most fortunate in securing such assistance," said Mr. Herresdorf, bowing again.

And then he proceeded to order fresh arrangements for the comfort of this valuable ally. Chairs had already been placed on the small forward deck of the tug, so that the passengers might enjoy the breeze and have full opportunity to observe the scenery as they ascended the river; he now delayed them longer in order to have an awning put up, so that Miss Chesney might be spared the fatigue of holding a parasol for several hours. This finally accomplished, and the boats attached with towing-lines, the little tug gave a shrill whistle and started up the river.

"How delightful!" said Miss Chesney, with a soft breath of satisfaction.

And indeed it would be difficult to imagine anything more delightful than the conditions which surrounded them. The air of crystalline clearness possessed also a quality of the most exhilarating freshness, the sky above was of the tint of turquoise, and the broad, beautiful river beneath of clearest emerald, while, glancing seaward, they could see the sparkling ocean spreading to the distant horizon and its waves breaking in white surf around the rocky point above which rose the picturesque mass of the castle. Flooded with brilliant sunshine the historic city lay, crowning the heights within its bastioned walls, its mighty masses of ruins and the towers of its ancient churches standing in bold relief, with the plumy palms that shot up here and there from its courts and gardens. A beautiful grove of these royal trees lined the opposite bank of the river, while a little farther along rose the green hillside against which stands the ancient double-arched structure of stone over the spring or well of pure delicious water known as the Well of Columbus, where even to the present time all sea-going vessels take their supply.

A few minutes later, however, a bend of the stream shut all this picture from their view, and they saw before them only the broad, deep river, with its clear, swift current and banks

fringed with the luxuriant growth of the tropics. A magnificent river it is, this lordly Ozama, especially after it has received its beautiful tributary the Isabella, and, like all the other rivers of this island,—to which Nature has given absolutely everything that is hers to give, and which man has only desolated and destroyed,—it flows through lands of the richest fertility, where only occasionally the forest has yielded to fields of sugar-cane, which year after year renews itself without cultivation. To the eyes of those who now ascended it, the enchanting vista presented at every turn, the wild, strange, wonderful beauty into which they entered, was in all respects the same as that which met the gaze of the first bold Spanish adventurers who looked upon it. Now and again a wooden wharf on the bank, and a road cut through the close, almost impenetrable mass of forest, indicated an estate near by, and once or twice they perceived the smoking chimney of a sugar-house where the grinding of cane was in progress. But the river itself flowed as majestically still and silent between its walls of living green, and those walls

seemed as untouched in their riotous splendour of towering trees and every conceivable form of undergrowth and parasite as if no such signs of man existed. As they proceeded onward, these signs became even more rare, and it seemed as if this marvellous emerald waterway led them, by one winding curve after another, into the very heart of a primeval world,—a world of Nature in all her virgin freshness, with such abounding variety, such wild luxuriance of loveliness, as she displays only beneath a tropical sun. Rare and beautiful birds abounded, and now and again a snowwhite heron made an exquisite picture, poising itself on the branch of some tree fallen over the water. It was at sight of one of these that Leslie forgot himself far enough to wish for a gun, until shamed by Miss Chesney's eyes.

"I wonder," she said, severely, "if it is not possible for a man of English blood to see a living creature without wanting to slaughter it! How correct was the Frenchman's description of an Englishman's idea of amusement!—' Let us go and kill something.' And the spirit survives wherever you find what is called the

Anglo-Saxon, by whatever national name he describes himself."

"One does n't expect a woman to sympathise with sport," said he, in an ill-judged attempt at self-defence.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she replied. "There are numbers of women who are so afraid of being considered womanly and of possessing a little sensitiveness and a few surviving prejudices in favour of humanity, that they outdo men in their enthusiasm for what is called 'sport.' Well, I am not afraid of the imputation of being sentimental and humane when I say that what you call sport is generally in its essence only cruelty. What could be more cruel than to desire to cut short the happy existence of that beautiful creature yonderthat creature who makes the world lovelier by merely existing in it-for no possible reason except to exercise your skill on a living target?"

"Of course," he hastened to say, "if I had a gun I should not think of shooting while you were by, since you hold such sentiments and the result would annoy you."

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"It would do more than annoy, it would enrage me," she said, promptly, "as wanton cruelty always does enrage me. I am disgusted that you should even think of such a thing."

And then, to indicate how deeply he was in disgrace, she turned her back upon him and began to talk to Ramon Herresdorf, who sat on her other side.

"I feel," she said, "as if this steam-tug was a dreadful anachronism in these wild, beautiful, peaceful waters. We ought to be in one of the native boats, silently and swiftly gliding along, as if we were indeed penetrating an unknown world. One might fancy then that, instead of a modern sportsman anxious to slaughter inoffensive herons, one had for a companion a mail-clad conquistador."

"Who would slaughter inoffensive Indians instead," remarked the sportsman thus alluded to.

"That is nonsense," said the young lady, without turning her head. "The Indians were not inoffensive. They met the discoverers with arms,—did you never hear of the Golfo de las Flechas?—and although, on general

principles, one regrets that men should kill one another, one cannot be ignorant of the fact that they have been doing it since the beginning of time. From the denunciations of the conduct of the Spaniards towards the inhabitants of the New World to which one is so freely treated, one would really suppose that the forefathers of the critics had been models of justice and kindness in their treatment of the aborigines, and that the Indians were in possession of the continent of America to-day, instead of having been despoiled and tricked out of the whole of it. Forefathers, do I say? Is there no killing and no cheating of them going on at present? If not, it is only because there are, practically speaking, none left either to kill or to cheat. I advise you to read A Century of Dishonour, and then venture to talk of so-called Spanish cruelties!"

"I really have n't, you know," answered meekly the victim of this attack.

"If there is anything that I detest," the speaker went on, unheeding the disclaimer, it is the contemptible phariseeism which English and American writers have always dis-

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played in dealing with this subject. Putting aside the story of the American continent, which one would think would be enough to close their lips, if one considers only what took place in the Spanish Main, have they never heard of Drake and Morgan and their followers? History records nothing worse than the deeds of those freebooters; but, instead of being hanged as double-dyed pirates and murderers, they were crowned with honours and titles by their countrymen, and are held up as heroes to the present day."

"But I must positively insist that I don't admire them; I consider them, on the contrary, about as bad scoundrels as the world ever produced," protested Leslie. "And, in any event, all that took place very much before my time, and I fail to see why I should be reviled on account of it."

"I am not reviling you in particular," said Miss Chesney: "I am speaking generally. I could say a great deal more——"

"I really hope you will not," he interposed.

"At least, I mean, I hope you will find a less exciting topic."

"I am not excited at all [with lofty calmness]. I am only tired of hearing the same second-hand remarks made over and over again by every English or American traveller that one meets in Spanish-American countries."

Here young Herresdorf laughed. "I should not think," he said, "that you would be likely to hear them repeated twice by the same person. It is a very unusual thing to hear anyone who is English or American speak as you do."

"I happen to have a sense of justice," said she, "and to have read some history, not merely a little fiction under that name."

Then Mr. Chesney, who had been smoking in meditative silence, made a diversion.

"I begin to think that the difficulties of exploring this country have been greatly exaggerated," he said. "Certainly it cannot be more difficult to penetrate now than it was in the days of the *conquistadores*, who explored every part of it more thoroughly than it has ever been explored since."

"I assure you, señor," said Ramon, "that it is not difficult at all. It is a little fatiguing

because of the necessity of making all journeys in the saddle, and because there are no public houses at which to stop. But if one has a good horse, and if it is not the rainy season, when the roads are likely to be almost impassable, the journey from Santo Domingo to Santiago or to Samaná is not difficult at all."

"I vote that we try it," cried Miss Chesney.
"It is what I have wanted to do from the first.
Do you think we could get good horses at this hacienda, or whatever you call it, to which we are going, Mr. Herresdorf?"

"Oh, yes, señorita, if you desire it, I have no doubt Don Mariano will find horses for you. But I thought—I hoped——"

"Yes?" said she, as the young man stammered and paused. "What was it you thought or hoped?"

"If you will allow me, then, to say so,—that you would return to Santo Domingo, and that Felisa might accompany you."

"Ah, I see," said she, with a glance at him as kindly as it was bright. "You think I may be of service to you in managing this possibly refractory young lady."

"I think," he responded, gravely, "that you may be of great service to her. Believe me, I am not thinking of myself."

"But I am thinking of you," she replied, quickly. "Will you pardon me if I say that I have heard your story, and that I am very much interested in it? You have my best wishes, and shall have my best help: I promise you that."

"You are very kind," said he, and there was a grateful light in his handsome dark eyes. "I think your help will mean a great deal. Felisa cannot but listen to what you will say to her. I do not mean," he added, proudly, "with regard to myself. If her own heart does not speak for me, I would not wish anything to be said in my behalf. But you can tell her what it is well that she should do, now that she is rich and important in the world."

"Well," said Miss Chesney, "I am a heretic on that as well as on a good many other points of the world's creed. I don't think that the mere possession of money constitutes importance. People in my eyes are important from

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what they are or from what they do. In other words, I value only character and achievement. Wealth is a mere accident, and, although a very powerful accident if used as a means to an end, it is really of no importance in itself except to its fortunate possessor. One should grow accustomed, I suppose, to the vulgar homage paid to it generally; but I never witness a display of the kind without wonder. Why on earth a man or a woman should be an object of intense interest and even adulation to others, who do not happen to be beggars, because he or she is rich, passes my comprehension, accustomed as I am to the phenomenon."

"And yet," said Leslie, who was lending an attentive ear to the conversation, "I have heard you speak very eloquently of the value of wealth and the great disadvantages of poverty."

"And so you might hear me again," she answered. "But because I recognise the value of wealth to its possessor, is that any reason why I should think the mere fact of its possession renders him or her of importance?

Be more logical, if you please. And as for you, Mr. Herresdorf——"

"Ah, Ramon, if you please," entreated the young man. "Mr. Herresdorf' I do not know at all as my name."

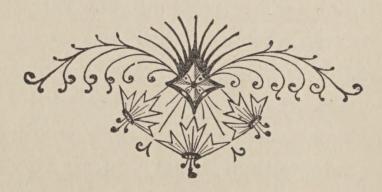
"In your pretty Spanish fashion, Don Ramon, then, pray understand that it is for your benefit I have made this little sermon. Do not feel and do not behave as if this girl had by the accident of her inheritance become a much more important person than she was before. She is a very fortunate person because of the great opportunities which this money gives her; but her importance is yet to be determined by the use she makes of it. For my part, if she fails to recognise the value of the disinterested affection which was hers in poverty and obscurity, I shall rate her importance as a human creature very low indeed."

"I think, señorita," said the young listener to this admonition, "that you are very wise. But, as you have said yourself, the world looks at these things differently, and unhappily I cannot close my eyes to the fact that Felisa is now very rich and that I am as poor

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as on the day she left me because I could not agree that we should be married at once."

"If Felisa," said Miss Chesney, emphatically, "does not understand that this is the one opportunity of her life—now that she is so rich—to know without doubt that she is loved for herself and not merely sought for her money, she is a very foolish Felisa indeed, and one who will deserve the fate which will certainly befall her of becoming the victim of a fortune-hunter."





CHAPTER X

THE HEIRESS HAS FLOWN

THE beautiful journey into wonderland lasted several hours; and just when the party began to feel more and more as if they were explorers of a virgin world, since for many miles the marvellous forest fringing their way had been unbroken, and the clear shining river with its swiftly flowing current undisturbed by any human presence save their own, the tug suddenly gave a shrill whistle, and Ramon said to his companions:

"We have arrived. This is Rosario."

They looked around them. Still the green forest, with its dense, impenetrable undergrowth, its giant creepers and wonderful parasites, but just before them was a hewn-out opening such as those they had seen before, a

wooden wharf at the water's edge, and a railroad track leading up a hillside beyond.

- "What!" said Mr. Chesney, "is there a railroad here?"
- "Oh, yes," Ramon answered, "such as is on all the sugar estates. One or two small engines and some cars with which to bring the sugar down for loading on the boats."
 - "How far distant is the sugar-house?"
 - "About a mile or a mile and a half."
- "It is strange that it was not placed upon the bank of the river, so as to load the sugar directly on the boats."
- "The railroad would be needed all the same to bring the cane from the fields," said the young Dominican, "and hence it is best to have the sugar-house where the residence is, on the high lands, or *llanos*, as we call them, in the middle of the estate."

The tug now whistled again, and was answered by another whistle inland. "They hear us, and are coming down," said Ramon.

A few minutes later they steamed up to the wharf and disembarked, just as another shrill whistle was heard beyond the tree-tops, and

the next moment a small engine, with flat-car attached, came rushing down the steep incline of the hill toward them. On the car, balancing himself with great skill in a standing position, was a small, dark man, who jumped off as soon as it halted, and came to meet them. He greeted Ramon cordially, and if he was surprised at the unexpected appearance of the strangers he did not manifest the surprise. Perhaps, as soon transpired, he was too deeply engrossed with other thoughts to notice them very much.

"This," said Ramon, turning to the others, is Señor Estragués, the manager of the estate. He speaks no English, therefore I must introduce you in Spanish.—These," he added to Señor Estragués, changing his tongue, are Mr. and Miss Chesney, whom my father begs you will consider his guests, and Mr. Leslie, an American gentleman, who has come to make an important communication regarding Felisa."

"Felisa!" cried Señor Estragués, throwing up his hands. The sound of the name seemed to transform him. He lost all the quietness

of demeanour which up to this moment had characterised him, and became a picture of excitement as he poured forth a torrent of words, speaking so rapidly that neither Mr. nor Miss Chesney, both of whom knew Spanish fairly well, could follow him. That his speech conveyed some very important tidings, however, was apparent not only from the words they were able to distinguish, but from the effect they produced upon young Herresdorf. As he listened, as he grasped the full import of what was said, he became pale as if the news were that of death, and his great, dark eyes grew wildly startled in expression. He seized the arm of Estragués with eager questioning, to which the other returned another torrent of words.

"For heaven's sake, what does it all mean?" Leslie asked Miss Chesney. "Can you understand them ?-has the man lost his senses?"

"He speaks so rapidly I can only partially understand him," she replied. "But I think —I fear that some harm has come to Felisa."

"Harm!" cried Ramon, turning toward her. "The worst-the worst, señorita! She has gone away with that man."

"Stanford?" exclaimed Leslie and Miss Chesney together.

"Stanford—yes. May the curse of God be upon him!"

Leslie and Miss Chesney looked at each other aghast. If this were so, what terrible, what irremediable thing had happened through the fatal delay of that first morning, through the lost hours they had so lightly idled away in the companionship of each other! This was perhaps the first thought in the minds of both. Then Leslie turned to Ramon.

"Where has she gone?—and how long?" he asked. "Surely she can be overtaken. Tell this person—he is her stepfather, is he not?"

"The husband of her stepmother—yes."

"Tell him what news I have brought, and that we must save the girl from the scoundrel who has taken her away, at any cost."

In language almost as rapid and vehement as his own, Ramon then told Señor Estragués of the news which Leslie brought. It had the effect of absolutely overwhelming him, and for a time rendering him incapable of speech.

"Felisa!" he gasped, in a tone of incredulity,
—"Felisa!" and could say no more.

"Tell him," said Leslie, "that there is not any doubt of it,—that Felisa is in her own right one of the richest women in the world, and that this villain who has taken her off knew it. Have you told him that? Well,"—as Ramon signified assent,—"tell him now that we must get her out of his hands, if any effort can accomplish it, and ask him where they have gone."

"He does not know," replied the young man, despairingly.

"Nonsense! He must know! How long have they been gone? What are the circumstances of the flight?"

"It is supposed that they left this morning at daybreak," Ramon answered. "Their absence was discovered when the family arose. Then was found a letter from Felisa saying"—here the speaker for a moment choked—"that she was gone for—for always, and that she wished me to be told that she had found someone to help her, though I would not."

"Did n't I tell you she was possessed of a

devil?" said Leslie, too angry to consider his words. "She is as heartless and cruel as she is bad-tempered. You are well rid of her, and, by heaven! I think the best thing would be to allow her to abide by her choice."

"No, no," cried Miss Chesney. "She is but a child,—a passionate, bad-tempered child, it is true, but lifelong misery is too heavy a punishment for her fault. Besides, think of allowing the wretch who has carried her away to be gratified by succeeding in his scheme. Never! You must save her at all hazards, at any cost, if she possibly can be saved."

"Yes, señor," said Ramon, "the señorita is right. She must be saved if possible. As for her treatment of me, that does not matter; that concerns only myself. Do not think of it again. But she is so young, and she has now such brilliant prospects, that we must not fail to make every effort to save her from this scoundrel who has deceived her and taken her away in ignorance of her great fortune."

"She is n't worth an effort," said Leslie, but, since I feel partly accountable for this, because I delayed in seeing your father on the day of my arrival, I will do my utmost—if we find that there is anything to do."

"And meanwhile," inquired Mr. Chesney, are we to stay here all day discussing the affair?"

This recalled them to the fact that the engine and car were waiting. Señor Estragués, roused to a sense of the proprieties of life, made the usual compliments to the guests commended to his charge.

"My house is yours," he assured them, and we will do all we can to render you comfortable, but I regret that you will find my wife in great distress on account of this unhappy occurrence, this conduct of one whom she loved as her own child."

"Doña Lucia has indeed deserved better treatment from Felisa," said Ramon, addressing Miss Chesney. "And, although she chafed against her life here, she could not say that Don Mariano was not also kind to her."

"I endeavoured to be so," said Don Mariano; "but she is of a disposition the most violent, the most unhappy."

"I am intensely disgusted with her," said Miss Chesney; "but all the same, for the sake of the five millions, and in order to defeat Mr. Stanford, we must move heaven and earth to save her. Now we will go, papa. I am afraid you are not as much interested in this errant heiress as the rest of us are."

"I confess," answered Mr. Chesney, "that I am not so much interested as to forget the need of rest and refreshment. I fear, however, that we cannot expect much attention or comfort in a house upset by an elopement."

"Do not fear, señor, but that your needs will be attended to as well as possible," said Ramon. "I will take care of that."

"Oh," said Mr. Chesney, who had the grace to look a little ashamed, "anything will do. I only regret that we should intrude at such a time on people who are so much disturbed. What a very—um—unfortunate kind of young person this heiress appears to be! As for you," added he, addressing Leslie, "I believe we spoke the other day of your chase of her. Instead of ending, it seems to be now only beginning."

"So it appears," Leslie assented, despondently.

They had all by this time mounted upon the flat-car, where the chairs from the deck of the tug were placed. Miss Chesney, however, declined to sit down, since the danger was great of flying off at a tangent into space: she preferred standing like the men, and balancing herself with the aid of her father's arm. The little engine put itself in motion, climbed the steep grade with some puffing, and on gaining the top sounded a whistle of triumph and rattled away briskly over the level land, which now spread far as the eye could view, covered in the immediate foreground with fields of densely growing, luxuriant cane, and in the distance with forest.

A few minutes brought them in sight of the smoking chimney of the sugar-house; a little later they paused before its great mass of machinery, where the air was filled with the odour of sugar, and where Don Mariano, springing down, apologised for the fact that it was necessary to walk across the few yards intervening between the end of the track and the

residence near by. This was a large wooden building, a single story in height, surrounded by a wide verandah. At sight of it Miss Chesney paused.

"I think," she said to young Herresdorf, "that Doña Lucia—is not that how you call her?—should have a little warning before we come upon her. Do you go, therefore, and beg her not to give herself any trouble about us. Meanwhile, as I have never seen the process of sugar-making, I will go over the sugar-house, if Señor Estragués does not object, and if he will call someone to act as our guide—for you will come too, papa, will you not? No, Mr. Leslie, certainly not you also, because your duty is to go at once and make your communication of Felisa's inheritance to Felisa's stepmother and guardian."

"You think of everything, señorita," said Ramon, "and you are very considerate. I will tell Doña Lucia what you say."

He then spoke to Don Mariano, who, answering, "Si, si!" with great alacrity, called a young man from the sugar-house and committed the strangers to his care. Mr. Chesney

somewhat reluctantly acquiesced in his daughter's arrangement, the wisdom of which was justified in his eyes only by the reflection that it would give time for such preparations as might be required for their reception.

It is unnecessary to follow Leslie in his interview with the stepmother of the wilful Felisa. What he was chiefly struck with was the extreme unworldliness she displayed in her indifference to the news of the great fortune which the girl had inherited. It did not seem to occur to her, nor in any perceptible manner to augment her distress, that all benefit in this inheritance (if Stanford succeeded in his object) would now be lost to those who up to this time had cared for and befriended the otherwise friendless girl.

"Yes, it is a pity," she agreed, "a great pity, that Felisa should have gone away in ignorance of what would have given her the freedom she desired. For she was like a wild bird beating her wings against a cage, señor," the kind woman added. "But at least, if this is so, the man will—marry her?"

"Marry her?" repeated Leslie, grimly,

when this was translated to him. "Be sure of that. Until he marries her he has no claim upon the only thing he cares for,—her money. It is the heiress whom he has carried off, and to whom he has not breathed one word of her inheritance. But he must have known or suspected my errand in the island, else why should he have been in such haste? The lady of your heart, Ramon, was certainly satisfied with scant wooing."

"She was so angry with me, señor," said Ramon, "that she grasped the first means of revenge. Else this is not like Felisa, who is as proud as she is passionate."

"The scoundrel found his opportunity readymade for him," said Leslie. "And the worst of it is that you and I both helped to make it. But if we are to frustrate him—of which, I fear, there is little hope—we must set to work at once. Find out everything about the flight. Ask how they were mounted, and in what direction they are supposed to have gone."

Ramon turned to Don Mariano, who to these questions poured forth a flood of reply, from which the following sum of definite information was extracted. Stanford, it transpired, had on the day before visited a small native proprietor resident near by, who was the possessor of two horses, and bargained for their use for a few days. At daybreak he appeared at this man's house, took the horses, and rode away, accompanied by a boy about twelve years old (the son of the owner), who was to bring them back. Further than this nothing was known positively. It was supposed that Felisa had been waiting for him near by, and that, having mounted her on one of the horses, he took the boy up behind himself on the other. But this was only conjecture. All that was certain was that they were gone, leaving behind the note from Felisa which Ramon now held in his hand, and that there was no clue to the road they had taken.

"But where is it supposed that they would go?" Leslie impatiently asked.

Ramon spread out his hands with a gesture which expressed a large ignorance on this point.

"Señor," he replied, "how can one say? The whole island is before them. We can

know nothing until we follow and inquire. But in my opinion they will make for Samaná."

- "Why for Samaná? Is n't that very far from here?"
- "On the contrary, it is very near. You imagine it far because you were there in the ship, which then came around the coast to Santo Domingo City; but by land, across the island, it is but a short distance."
 - " How far?"
- "To Sanchez, at the head of Samaná Bay, it is not more than twenty leagues from here."
- "Is it possible? Then, of course, to Sanchez they would go, since they could there take ship and leave the island, which Stanford would certainly desire to do as quickly as possible. Does not the man from whom the horses were obtained know their destination?"
- "Don Mariano says that no information could be obtained from him."
- "Nevertheless, be sure he knows, and if the destination had not been near by he would not have given his horses, nor sent a child to bring them back alone. We may regard that as certain. However, it may be as well for you to

see what you can do in the way of extracting information from him as soon as our arrangements for pursuit are made. Can Don Mariano mount us?"

To this question Don Mariano promptly signified assent. He had not thought it necessary to take any steps toward pursuing Felisa when he had conceived her to be only a very wilful, troublesome, and unimportant person: indeed, it is likely that his sentiments with regard to her had been altogether in accord with those of Mr. Herresdorf, and that he had secretly regarded her departure as a good riddance. But his feeling also had undergone a great change since the news of her inheritance had reached him, and he was now ready and eager to aid in organising pursuit. It appeared that he had at command several very good horses,-better animals in every respect than those on which the eloping pair were mounted, —and while he went to have these made ready, Doña Lucia on her part hastened away to have a lunch spread as soon as possible, first begging Ramon to go and bring in Mr. and Miss Chesney, with the assurance that she would do her

best for them. Leslie, however, bade Ramon devote himself to the preparations for their immediate departure, while he would bear Doña Lucia's message.

Going over to the sugar-house, he met Mr. and Miss Chesney emerging from it, the former declaring that he did not find the fumes of boiling sugar sufficiently sustaining to take the place of more solid nourishment. "The people can at least give one a glass of milk," he was saying when Leslie met them.

"Doña Lucia begs that you will come over to the residence, where she will do all in her power to make you comfortable," he said. "She is at this moment engaged in preparing a lunch which it is to be hoped will include something besides a glass of milk."

"If it includes that, I shall be satisfied," said Mr. Chesney. "Well, have you discovered anything further about the flight of your eloping pair?"

"Only that they will probably make for Sanchez, at the head of Samaná Bay. It seems—strangely enough, to me—that we are near the place."

"Why, of course we are near it," exclaimed Miss Chesney. "Have you never looked at a map of the island? It is not more than a hundred miles across from Santo Domingo City to Samaná, the two points being almost opposite each other, at the narrowest part of the island."

"I am afraid that I don't know much of the geography of Santo Domingo," Leslie admitted. "But at all events I shall start in half an hour in that direction on a forlorn hope of pursuit."

"Very forlorn, I think," said Mr. Chesney.
"How are you going?"

"On horseback, of course. No one travels otherwise here, you know."

"Papa," said Miss Chesney, stopping abruptly to address her father, "here is our chance to see something indeed of the interior of the island. What is to prevent our taking horses also and going with Mr. Leslie over to Samaná?"

"Katherine," replied her father, with energy, "I think you are distracted. What is to prevent us? Why, everything. How are we prepared for such an expedition?"

"We are perfectly prepared," said the young

lady. "In the vague hope of penetrating farther after we once got so far as this, I have brought everything necessary for a ride of a hundred—two hundred—three hundred miles! In point of fact, I would undertake to explore the whole island with the equipment we have."

"But it is n't a hundred miles from here to Samaná," said Leslie, on whom flashed delightedly the hope of a companionship which would have made a journey over Sahara agreeable. "At the utmost it is not reckoned to be more than sixty, and that seems doubtful. Really, sir,"—turning to Mr. Chesney,—"I wish you would take the idea into serious consideration. It is a good opportunity to see something of this island, which is an absolute terra incognita even to its own inhabitants, and such a traveller as yourself cannot possibly be content to leave it without having seen any more than a fringe of coast."

"H'm!" said Mr. Chesney, "I don't know. I doubt if there is anything in the interior to repay one for the certain hardships to be encountered."

"There is everything," cried his daughter, enthusiastically, "and here we are at a good

starting-point, with an easy destination ahead of us. Oh, papa, *don't* think, *don't* consider; just say that you will go.''

"Confound this heiress of yours, Leslie!" said Mr. Chesney, irritably. "She is at the bottom of the whole thing. You want to go," addressing his daughter, "because of your interest in this ridiculous chase."

"I am interested in it,—very much interested," she acknowledged; "but if there were no heiress and no chase in question I should still want to go. Think! It is only a ride of fifty or sixty miles at the utmost; and what is that to us? To people unaccustomed to travelling, or to horses, it might be something formidable; but not to us."

"I doubt if there is such a thing as a decent horse to be had here," said Mr. Chesney, beginning to waver.

Miss Chesney shot a radiant glance at Leslie,
—a glance which said that she considered her
point gained.

"Oh, I hope we may find some horses that can carry us," she said, eagerly. "Let us hasten and see."



CHAPTER XI

THE CHASE CONTINUES

THE man as well as the woman who hesitates is lost. It was vain after this for Mr. Chesney to attempt to stem his daughter's determination to make one of the rescuing expedition. And in fact, after discussing the matter with Don Mariano, and being assured that the journey to Samaná involved no hardship beyond that of one night spent on the wayside in some hut of the country, he began to think that it might be as well to embrace such an opportunity to see something of a land almost as unknown to-day as when the great Discoverer led his little band of gentlemen over the mountain pass, still called in memory of them the Pass of the Hidalgos, into that plain, perhaps the most beautiful and most fertile in the world, which he named in his delight the Vega Real—Royal Plain.

The horses Don Mariano provided for the party, which included himself, were not handsome in appearance, but wiry and enduring, as the horses of the island mostly are. And great was the surprise, greater yet the admiration, of Leslie and young Herresdorf when Miss Chesney made her appearance equipped in a ridinghabit that sat admirably upon her slender figure, and wearing a soft felt hat which was as becoming as it was suitable for the occasion. In this attire, and with a light mackintosh tied behind her saddle, she declared herself ready to ride to the Haytian frontier, if need were.

It was settled that the party should carry no weight, in order not to lessen the speed of their progress; but a servant followed on another horse laden with their bags and with some hammocks which Doña Lucia was thoughtful enough to provide, — " for beds you will not find," she said, shaking her head.

There was no long delay over these details of departure. Within two hours after Leslie had met Mr. and Miss Chesney at the door of the sugar-house, they were mounted and riding away, for everyone knew that if there was now little hope of saving the headstrong girl from the fate she had brought upon herself, that slender hope was diminished by every moment of further delay. Even Mr. Chesney began to show signs that the spirit of the pursuit was waking within him, and made no protest when it was declared that they must ride as briskly as possible. Their horses were fresh, and they started off at a good pace.

"I am almost ashamed to say that I find this very exhilarating and delightful," Katherine confessed to Leslie as they rode side by side over a road which wound through the luxuriant cane-fields toward the forest before them. "It would be delightful enough simply to be mounted on horseback and going into scenes new, fresh, and wild; but when the excitement and interest of the chase on which we are bent are added to it, it is an experience which I would not have missed for anything. Really, I owe a great deal to you and your heiress."

"I am glad you enjoy it," said Leslie, smil-

ing. "It reconciles me to what I should otherwise consider a very disagreeable business. For I confess I don't like pursuing runaway young ladies. It is not exactly the rôle I should choose in the drama of an elopement."

She laughed. "But remember that this is not an ordinary elopement. Our object is not to separate lovers, however foolish, but to rescue a deluded girl—"

"And her millions."

"Certainly her millions, from the man who is carrying her off for the sake of those millions. We are chasing him—remember that: we are trying to defeat him in one of the most audacious schemes of abduction ever attempted."

"Can one exactly call it abduction, when the lady has gone off of her own free will?"

"Do you consider it free will, when she is in ignorance of his motive, and wild with passion besides?"

"Not to speak of an amiable desire to revenge herself on the man she has up to this time professed to love. It is really impossible for me to feel any interest in the chase on her account; but I agree that we want to frustrate

the scoundrel who has carried her off, and I suppose the Anglo-Saxon blood for which you were scorning me on our way up the river is pleasantly excited by the fact of chasing anything."

She could not but laugh again. "Well, who ever questioned that a chase is exciting? Oh, do you think that there is the least hope that we shall overtake them?"

"Not much, I am afraid,—to speak quite candidly. But we should not feel satisfied unless we made the effort, you know."

"Not you and I, at least. For I cannot forget that your delay—of which I was the cause—brought all this about."

"Don't exaggerate. It only gave an opportunity which no one could possibly have foreseen. And I confess that I cannot altogether regret it, when I think that as one consequence we are making this little expedition together, and that you are enjoying it."

"I can't help that," said she, a little contritely; "but my heart is quite set on accomplishing the object of our expedition, I assure you. Why are we stopping here now?"

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"This, I presume, is the house of the man who furnished the horses, and who is supposed to know something of the route of the absconding pair."

"You speak as if they were forgers," said Miss Chesney, as she drew up her horse where the others had already paused, in front of one of the palm-thatched houses common in the country,—a rude, simple building of two rooms, with one or two primitive outhouses. Under a great tamarind-tree in front of this dwelling, a man of the darkly mixed blood of the island paisanos stood, talking with a rather sullen air to Don Mariano and Ramon.

"I don't understand what that fellow is saying," Leslie observed, "but I am sure from his manner that we are wasting time in halting here. There is no information to be drawn from him."

But this proved to be a mistake. Questioned authoritatively, the man finally admitted that the horses had been engaged to go to Sanchez, from which place his son was to bring them back. Of anything save this bare fact he professed complete ignorance.

- "It does not matter," said Ramon, as they rode on. "We are certain now that we are on the right road. The rest lies with their horses—and with ours."
- "Do you know anything of their horses?"
 Leslie asked.
- "Don Mariano says that they are very poor. He thinks that they will certainly break down in crossing the cordillera."
- "Ah!" cried Miss Chesney, "we shall cross the mountains, then?"
- "Without doubt, señorita: did you not know it? We must cross them to reach the north side of the island."
 - "Where do we cross?" asked Leslie.
- "There is but one place, the pass called the Sillón de la Viuda. Ah, señorita, you are startled! Do you not know what that was?"

It had been a sudden, sharp report, like a pistol-shot close at hand,—for they had now entered the forest,—which made Miss Chesney suddenly rein up her horse. "Certainly I know what it was," she replied, quickly. "It was the discharge of a gun."

"Not at all. It was only the explosion of

the higuero — I know not how you call it. Mire!" He rode into the woods, and in a moment returned, bearing a corrugated, tomato-shaped fruit in his hand. "This it was," he said. "When it is dry, it explodes suddenly with a loud noise, as you heard, and scatters the seed, of which it is full, in all directions."

"The sand-box fruit," said Leslie. "I have heard of it, but I never saw it before. Like Miss Chesney, I had no doubt that report was caused by the discharge of firearms."

And now for a time there was little conversation possible, for their way was the merest apology of a road, being in fact hardly more than a trail cut through the forest by the simple means of clearing out the dense undergrowth and such trees as stood immediately in the line followed. As they rode in single file, with the thick foliage arching over their heads and the wonderful tropical verdure on each hand, it was difficult to believe that they were following any path at all, and not breaking a way for themselves through the virgin wilderness. Then came the fording of swift, clear,

flashing streams, the banks of which were such a marvel of vegetation, of climbing, flowering vines and parasites, of exquisite orchids and beautiful ferns, that only the thought of the pressing necessity for haste prevented Miss Chesney from demanding a halt, that the eye might be, in some degree at least, satisfied with gazing upon these strange, new forms of beauty.

Then presently out of the forest again and riding over rolling savannas, broken by belts of timber and covered by luxuriant grass, but almost entirely without sign of cultivation or habitation. And here came into view the mountains towards which their faces were set, —glorious, cloud-capped heights, to the feet of which rolled these magnificent plains. Katherine Chesney uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Oh, what a picture! What a scene!" she cried. "And it is there we are going?"

"Yes, señorita," Ramon answered. "Do you see that deep depression yonder in the range? That is the Sillón de la Viuda; there we must cross."

"Can we cross to-day?"

"Hardly, I fear. We are still many leagues distant from the cordillera. If we can only reach the foot of the mountains by night, so as to be ready to ascend early to-morrow, we shall do well."

"But if we stop," said she, "I do not see how we can possibly overtake those whom we are pursuing, and who have so much the advantage of us in their start."

"Putting all question of ourselves aside," said Leslie, "it would hardly be possible for our horses to go on indefinitely."

"Indefinitely,—no. I never thought of that. But we should go on until we reach the place where they have stopped. Else what is gained by our riding after them?"

"If we were alone, we men, and our horses could stand it, we might do that—" Leslie was beginning, when she interrupted him impetuously:

"What do you mean by talking in that manner? 'If you were alone.' Do you suppose I came along to be a drag upon you, to retard your movements in any degree? Do

you imagine that I am not as capable of riding on until we accomplish our end as you are? If I had thought otherwise I certainly would not have come. I am astonished at you, Mr. Leslie,—astonished. I thought you knew me better."

"I should have done so," replied Leslie, meekly. "I am rather astonished myself for venturing to suggest that you had any feminine weakness. We 'll promise not to consider you, then; but we must not break down our horses, you know: that would be to make success impossible. And I fancy that by the time we reach the foot of those mountains yonder we shall be obliged to give them a rest."

"If we can only reach there!" said Ramon, gazing at the great mass of the yet distant range, as if his fiery impatience were almost more than he could bear.

"If we only had some roads!" said Leslie.
"I am sure this is the original trail of the conquistadores, and that no one has ever done a stroke of work on it since they made it."

"There is a faint hope," said Ramon, on

whose preoccupied attention this remark fell unheeded, "that if we can reach the foot of the pass we may there find those whom we seek. It is true that they have the start of us by more than half a day; but, unless they are able to cross the mountains before night, they must stop on this side; for no one would attempt the pass after nightfall. Now, it is not likely that they have been able to cross, because their horses are poor, and the roads, as you perceive, are very bad. Therefore, I repeat, there is a hope—a faint hope—of overtaking them at the foot of the pass, if we are only able to reach there ourselves."

Miss Chesney set her mouth in a resolute line. "We must reach there," she said. "It is not a thing to be debated or questioned; it simply must be done. I, for one, will not consent to stop short of it."

Ramon glanced at the sun with something like a groan. At that moment he would have given much for the power of Joshua. "If we can accomplish it!" he said. "But it will be hard work."

It was hard work, both for the horses and

their riders. The condition of the roads made fast riding an impossibility, let them chafe as they would, and although whenever they found themselves on an open stretch of the *llanos* they had a wild and, to Katherine and Leslie, an exhilarating gallop, their progress was on the whole so much retarded that the near approach of night—which follows in this tropical region almost immediately on the setting of the sun—found them still several miles distant from the great cordillera, which now loomed before them like a mighty wall.

"Señorita," said Ramon, suddenly riding up to Miss Chesney's side, "we are now near an estancia,—that is, a small farm, you know,—where Don Mariano and your father are talking of stopping for the night. It is well that you shall stop; but Mr. Leslie and I will, I think [he glanced at Leslie] ride on to the foot of the pass. We cannot be much more than a league distant from it now."

"And if you can ride on," said Miss Chesney, "what is there to prevent our doing so? I will not consent to stop. It is absurd. We are not riding to amuse ourselves,—at least not

primarily,—and since we came out to do a thing, we should do it."

These sentiments she very forcibly repeated to her father and Don Mariano when they presently announced to her their intention of stopping at the estancia; and such was the effect of her eagerness and eloquence, not to speak of her obstinacy, that it was finally resolved to push on and make an effort to reach the foot of the pass before night absolutely fell upon them.

"You acknowledge that there is a faint hope of finding them there," she said to Don Mariano, "a faint hope that they have not been able to cross the mountain. How, then, can you entertain for a moment the idea of halt or delay? Is it not imperative that we should rescue that girl at the earliest possible moment?"

"Yes, yes, that is certainly imperative," Don Mariano agreed, somewhat awed by her flashing eyes. "But it is only a hope, a very faint hope, which we have of overtaking them this side of the pass; and if we do not, and are belated in the woods-"

With a curling lip she pointed to the sky. Floating high in the eastern heaven was the moon, very near its full,—a beautiful pale white orb in the sunlight pouring upon it, but with the promise of an infinite resplendency when the king of day should be withdrawn and her chaste majesty should rule the night.

"Is there any danger of our being very badly belated with that to guide us?" she asked.

"That," replied her father, dryly, "can show us our way, it is true, but it cannot provide us with shelter."

"Oh, for shelter," said Ramon, eagerly, there is an empty house—a hut, but as good as that at which you were about to stop—just at the foot of the mountain, where travellers often halt. With the hammocks, you can be as comfortable there as at the *estancia*,—perhaps more so."

"Then, in heaven's name, let us get on," said Mr. Chesney, pettishly.

And so they pressed on. Their horses were now very tired, so fast riding was impossible; but as the sun presently sank in the west, with

a wonderful but short-lived glory of gold, the air freshened, and a delicious breeze, filled with a wild, sylvan fragrance, suggestive of the mountains whence it came, began to blow in their faces from the great heights they were steadily approaching. It revived their energies, exhausted by the long ride during the hot afternoon, and in the more elastic tread of their horses they perceived that these also felt it. Then, as the twilight yielded to the reign of night, and the moon lent her enchantment to the scenes through which they rode, to the deep forests, where the air was heavy with perfume, to swift, silvery streams pouring down from their mountain sources, and to the glory of wide-spreading plains and majestic towering heights, a silence as of awe in the vast, marvellous beauty of nature fell upon them. Katherine Chesney said to herself that she would never forget this ride as long as she lived.

But, enchantment though it was, it came to an end at last. Just when Miss Chesney began to think that it was like a dream which need have no ending, but would go on indefinitely in ever-deepening beauty, Ramon, who was riding in front, uttered an exclamation and turned to his companions.

"The house!" he said, pointing.

The next instant they saw before them the house of which he spoke,—a rude, thatched hut, standing near the road, by the side of a stream singing over its stones, and under the shade of immense spreading trees.

They looked at each other. Apparently those whom they sought were not here, for all was still, dark, and silent; no horses were fastened near the house, nor was there any gleam of light.

Ramon said nothing. He rode forward and flung himself from his saddle before the door.

The rest of the party halted and sat motionless on their horses, watching him. Instinctively they felt that it was his right to enter the house first and determine if it was as empty as it seemed. And yet, as he disappeared in the doorway, for door there was none, a sudden thought came to Leslie. "He may need help," he muttered, and sprang from his horse.

He had hardly done so, and, with his bridle

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in his hand, taken a few steps toward the door, when Ramon reappeared, his face, as the moonlight shone upon it, ghastly pale.

"Come!" he said, quickly, as his glance fell on Leslie. "The man is here,—wounded."





CHAPTER XII

AT THE FOOT OF THE CORDILLERA

L ESLIE delayed only a moment, to repeat to the others what had been said, and to add in imperative aside to Mr. Chesney, "Don't allow Miss Chesney to enter," before he hurried into the house.

Its interior seemed to him so dark, although the brilliant moonlight was pouring in through chinks and crevices of the rude walls as well as through the wide, empty doorway, that he could not at first distinguish anything. But a groan guided his steps, and the next moment he was standing by a man's prostrate form, which lay extended on the earthen floor.

"What is the matter?" he demanded, sternly. "How are you hurt?"

The man ceased groaning to utter an astonished oath. "Who are you?" he asked.

"What is a white man doing in this infernal place?"

"Never mind who I am [more sternly]. How are you hurt?"

"I'm stabbed-killed, likely-by a shedevil! She 's my murderess, if I die. Remember that."

"You 'll die now, this instant, if she has been harmed!" cried Ramon, fiercely. "Where is she?"

"She 's gone, curse her!" was the reply. "She stabbed me, and then, taking the horses, made off, leaving me to die. She is my murderess, I tell you. Her name is Felisa Ancram."

"We know perfectly well who she is-and who you are," said Leslie, coolly, restraining Ramon by a strong hand on his arm. "We are here, a party of us,"-Don Mariano had now entered,-" in order to take her out of your hands. We have been following you all day, and it is on the whole a good thing for you that you are found in a helpless condition. But be sure of one thing,"—his voice again grew sternly significant,—" your helplessness will not serve you to escape your deserts if Felisa Ancram has suffered the least injury at your hands."

"She suffer injury at my hands!" cried the man, in a tone of mingled rage and fear. "It is just the other way. I am injured—murdered, perhaps—by her, and only because I tried to kiss her. As if a man had n't a right to kiss the girl who was running away with him!"

"We will take your statement for what it is worth until we find the young lady," said Leslie. "It will not be well for you then if it does not agree with hers. Now, as a matter of humanity, I suppose we must look after your wound."

He turned to Ramon, but Ramon was talking to Don Mariano, pouring forth in Spanish a recital of what the man had said, and, seeing that there was no assistance to be hoped for in that quarter, he went outside, where Mr. and Miss Chesney, having dismounted, were standing in the moonlight, holding their horses.

"Oh, here is Mr. Leslie," cried the young lady, in a tone of eagerness, as he appeared. "Now we shall know what this means."

He could not but smile as he went up to her.

"It means," he said, "that the astonishing Felisa has developed a new rôle. She has stabbed the man with whom she eloped, left him with perfect nonchalance, taken the horses, and continued her journey alone."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Chesney, while his daughter cried incredulously, "It is impossible!"

"The man is in this hut," Leslie replied; stabbed — dangerously, he thinks—by this gentle young lady, for no other reason, he says, than that he attempted to kiss her."

"Mr. Leslie! you don't believe it?"

"It is very likely that he lies," returned Leslie, coolly, "but equally probable that he is telling the truth. I confess I am ready to believe anything of my interesting heiress. At all events, we must accept his statement until she contradicts it. And meanwhile we are bound to look after his wound, helpless as he is in our hands."

"I suppose so," the young lady agreed, "although I am perfectly sure that he has only got what he deserved. Have you examined the wound at all?"

"Certainly not: how could I, in that dark place?"

"You must bring him outside," said Mr. Chesney. "This moonlight is brilliant enough for any purpose and I will examine him. The necessities of life have taught me a little surgical knowledge, and we never travel without simple aids in case of accident—eh, Katherine?"

"Certainly not, papa. I have a roll of surgeon's plaster; but it is in my bag, and that is not here yet."

"It will come in time, perhaps. Meanwhile we'll see how he is hurt, and improvise some bandages."

"I'm rather afraid of moving him," said Leslie, hesitatingly. "If he is badly hurt, the danger of bleeding would be great, you know. And yet to do anything for him without light is impossible."

"So impossible that we must risk it," said Mr. Chesney, entering the house.

The moment after he and Leslie had gone in, Ramon stalked out, indignation on his handsome young face.

"Do you know," he said, walking up to Miss Chesney, "that they are going to doctor that scoundrel—tie up his wound—I don't know what not—while what he deserves is to be left to die like a dog!"

"He deserves it, perhaps," she replied, but one must consider humanity even in the case of a scoundrel, you know. And we must also remember," she added, for the young man's pale, fierce face rather frightened her, that Felisa went with him of her own will, and that she seems to have punished him severely for a very trifling offence."

"That is his story. How do we know that it is true?" said he. "Not that I think her to blame if it is true. She was right,—quite right."

"Well, right or wrong," pursued Miss Chesney, "it will be awkward for her if the man dies. So, for her sake, you see, we must try to save his life."

"Awkward for her?—not at all," said Ramon. "Do you think anyone would blame her for defending herself? There is not a man in Santo Domingo that would not applaud her."

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"Perhaps so, but—er—you must remember that it was her own fault that she was in the position on which the man presumed."

"If he were worth calling a man [very hotly], he would have felt bound to treat her with more respect because she had trusted herself to him."

"You are a dear, chivalrous boy," said Miss Chesney, patting him on the arm as if she had been his mother, "and your sentiments are those of a paladin. But it will not do, it really will not do, for a woman to fancy that men in general are paladins. That, I suppose, was your Felisa's mistake. But here comes the man who has suffered for it—and for his own. Poor wretch! he looks half dead."

"From fear of death!" said Ramon, scornfully.

And indeed fear of death had a great deal to do with Mr. Stanford's condition, as the examination of his wound soon proved. It had been inflicted by a small, keen dagger, which, instead of penetrating the heart, as it might have done had the blow been dealt by a stronger and more practised hand, had, happily for him,

glanced from the rib, and made only a deep and painful flesh-wound, which had bled profusely, but was not in itself dangerous, Mr. Chesney declared. The man with the bag came up while the examination was in progress, so that the plaster was produced, handkerchiefs were used as bandages, and the wound was not unskilfully bound up. The patient was then propped against a tree, given a stimulant to revive him, for he was faint from loss of blood, and sternly bidden to give a full and (if he were wise) truthful account of his late proceedings.

On the degree of his astonishment, the intensity of his mortification, when he recognised the familiar faces of his late fellow-voyagers, Leslie and the Chesneys, in this hostile party which had so unexpectedly overtaken him, it is not necessary to dwell. The humiliation of his position, the complete failure of his bold stroke for securing possession of a great fortune, made him furious; and at first he refused to speak, taking refuge in sullenness and pretended weakness. But a few forcible words from Leslie were sufficient to unclose his lips.

"See here," said that gentleman. "As I have already told you, we have no intention of adding to the injury which you have—very justly, I am sure—received from Doña Felisa, until we hear whether or not she corroborates your account. Until we find her, you are safe, and if when we find her your story proves to be true, we will let you go-with the contempt you have merited. But meanwhile it appears to me that you are dependent upon us for everything. We have found you here without any means of getting away or even of sustaining life, and, if you do not desire that we leave you in the same condition, it will be well for you to tell us what we want to know."

"What is that?" asked the other, opening his eyes with a glance which matched the snarl of his voice.

"In the first place [very suavely], how did you discover that the young lady was so well worth carrying off?"

"Was there any mystery in that? How did you discover it? As for me, I was sent here to find the Ancram heirs. Since you know all

about it, I suppose you are on the same

"We are not at present discussing my business. Kindly inform us who sent you here to find the Ancram heirs."

"A person who had a right to send me."

"Anyone, I presume, has that right. The question is not of right, but of interest. Was it someone who was interested in their *not* being found?"

"What is the use of beating about the bush?" replied the other, impatiently. "Of course it was Miss Harrison: who else had any interest in the matter? I am a distant cousin of hers, and she sent me to look for the missing heirs, with instructions to find means to convey them to some place where they would not be likely to hear of the search for them."

Leslie looked at Miss Chesney, who was seated somewhat in the background, but near enough to hear all that was said. There was a smile in his eyes, which she understood to be a recognition of the accuracy with which she had divined the nature of this man's errand

to the island. Then he glanced back at the speaker, amused, contemptuous.

"And were you, in accordance with your instructions, intending to convey the heiress of the Ancram fortune where she would never be likely to hear of that fortune, when you induced her to leave her home?" he asked.

"Am I likely to have been such a fool?" returned the other, shortly. "When I found the heirs resolved into one girl, of course I made up my mind at once to throw over Miss Harrison's interest and look out for my own. My plan was to get hold of her before she heard the news, and marry her offhand. For all practical purposes the fortune would then have been mine. I should n't have been in such haste, I should have gone to work more slowly, only I did n't know what day would bring the news. I never suspected you had it, or I might have acted differently."

"I don't really see that you could have acted with a more single regard for your own interest, or with more energy in attempting to secure it, if you had known," remarked Leslie, calmly. "Your failure seems to lie in the fact

that you were thinking too much of the fortune to give sufficient attention to the character of the woman with whom you had to deal. Now tell us how you induced her to elope with you. Did you make love to her?"

"No. As soon as I began that I saw it would n't do. But I also saw that she was in a state of mind which made it easy to work upon her by other means. She was discontented with her life, recklessly anxious to escape from it, and so angry, when I first met her, with somebody or something "-Ramon could not restrain a motion which drew Miss Chesney's compassionate glance to him-"that she was as easy to influence and as blind to consequences as a child. I introduced myself to her as an old friend of her father's, you know-or he knows [a gesture toward Don Mariano], and this made it easy to gain her confidence. She told me she had a plan of running away and going to the States, asked my advice, and wanted to know if I thought she could support herself after she reached there. Of course I encouraged her, offered to help her, told her I would take her over to

Samaná, where we could catch the steamer for New York. Nothing was said of final results, but it never entered my mind that any woman could be such a fool as not to know what she commits herself to when she runs away with a But I am bound to believe that she either did n't know or did n't care. At all events, she just meant to make use of me, and that was all. Well, we got off early, as you probably know, and rode all day, but the horses were such wretched brutes that it was late in the afternoon when we reached this place. It was necessary to rest for a while, and I was for staying here all night,—I never thought of pursuit,—but she would n't hear of it, insisted that we should go on, and finally carried her point. I agreed to go on, but said I must have a kiss in payment. She refused. I caught hold of her, and quick as lightning she had out a knife and stabbed me. I thought I was done for,—I bled like an ox,—but much she cared! She got on her horse, put the boy on mine, and rode off, without caring whether I lived or died. She 's a devil, I tell you—a regular devil!"

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"She is a brave girl, who knows how to treat a brute like you," cried Ramon. "If you speak of her again except with respect, you will answer to me, wounded or not."

Stanford gave him an evil look, but did not otherwise notice his speech, continuing to address himself to Leslie.

"Now you have the whole story, and I hope your curiosity is satisfied. If I die of this wound,—and it 's more than probable in this d——d climate,—I want it understood again that it was deliberate murder."

"You will not die," said Mr. Chesney,
unless inflammation sets in to an uncommon degree. But you will not be able to ride for several days."

"Then what the devil am I to do? Stay here and starve in this hole in the wilderness?"

"We will decide what to do with you before we go on," said Leslie. "Meanwhile,"—he rose as he spoke,—"I am sure we all stand in need of immediate refreshment in the form of supper."



CHAPTER XIII

A JEST THAT WOUNDS

ALF an hour later Katherine Chesney said to herself that she should never forget the scene before her, never cease to congratulate herself upon the fortunate chance which had enabled her to witness it.

Certainly nothing could be imagined more romantically picturesque than her immediate surroundings. Supper over, she had withdrawn a little from the group of men—who still remained in easy attitudes, most of them smoking, near the fire which had been kindled for making the coffee—and regarded the whole picture with an artist's eye for effect, delighting in every detail of its wild beauty. The great cordillera, at the foot of which they were encamped, rose in towering majesty above them, its vast, deeply furrowed sides covered

with impenetrable forest, from which came wafted all those aromatic odours of tropical growths which the land-breeze carries far out to sea, to fill the mind of the traveller in some wave-cradled ship with visions of these green gorges, filled with luxuriant vegetation and with the eternal melody of falling, flashing waters. Some of these waters were even now pouring close beside her over the rocks which strove to bar their course, falling in fairy cataracts and filling the solitude with their silvery song. Encompassing the open spot where the hut stood, the horses were tethered, and the fire blazed, were the woods, with all their varied verdure, their climbing vines and parasites. The broad flood of silver moonlight falling over these, and shining on the remote, mysterious, solemn heights of the great mountains, thrilled like music through the sensitive appreciation of the woman regarding it. She forgot the drama which had amused and interested her in this adventure—the passionate, undeveloped girl, with her beautiful stormy face, the commonplace mercenary schemer who had so unexpectedly touched a point of tragedy—in the deeper thought, the deeper emotion, roused by this penetrating charm of Nature in her wildest, freshest form.

Presently there was a stir of the party around the fire. The servant who had been hanging the hammocks—two within the hut for Mr. and Miss Chesney, and the rest to the boughs of trees without—had now finished his work, and it was necessary to place the injured Stanford in that which was allotted to him. This having been accomplished, Leslie strolled over to where Miss Chesney was seated at the foot of a tall palm-tree, her hands clasped around her knees in meditative attitude.

"Is this romantic enough to satisfy you?" he asked, divining her mood, as he came up to her with a smile. "Or would you like things more unconventional, more adventurous still?"

"I could not wish—I could not imagine—anything more beautiful than this," she answered, indicating with a gesture the picture before them. "I cannot tell you how much I am indebted to you for being the providence which has brought me here."

"Oh, as for that,"—he sat down beside her,

—"the indebtedness is all the other way. Your presence makes this excursion delightful, which otherwise would be a very tiresome and annoying experience indeed."

"I don't see how it could possibly be that under any circumstances, it is so full of dramatic surprises."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid that I don't enjoy dramatic surprises,—especially in the form of a wounded man whom, owing to his wound, one can't kick as one would like to, and a runaway young lady with a dagger for luggage."

"I have taken Felisa back into my good opinion," said Miss Chesney, calmly. "She is a fool, of course,—an absolute fool,—but she never meant to run away with that man in the manner we imagined. So much is clear from his story."

"Then it is flattery to call her a fool: she must be an idiot," said Leslie, "and even more of a tigress than I imagined. 'A regular devil,' as that fellow yonder so feelingly declared."

Miss Chesney laughed. "Was not his rage

amusing? One could see how she turned on him with blazing eyes and whipped out that dagger. Oh, I like her; say what you will, I like her. She is so very unconventional."

"Well, yes, decidedly unconventional," Leslie agreed. "To run away with a man after two days' acquaintance, stab him on somewhat slight provocation, and then ride off, leaving him probably to die alone, is somewhat out of the line of ordinary conventionality, one must admit. As for how admirable it may be——"

"Oh, I said nothing about her conduct being admirable. But she is interesting: one likes to speculate on what she will do next. Has anybody the least idea where she has gone?"

"Not the least. But after we have crossed the mountains to-morrow we shall begin to inquire for an errant damsel, attended by a small boy. She may still intend to sail for New York from Sanchez."

"But if she has no money?"

"That is an immaterial point to one whose knowledge of the world appears so extensive.

And, as we are aware, it will not be a difficulty to hamper her long."

"Certainly not. But think of five millions in the hands of such a child! What do you suppose she will do with it?"

"The question rather is, what will she not do with it? But for some years, you know, she must have a guardian: she is only seventeen."

" Perhaps you will be the guardian."

"No, thank heaven. My duties in connection with her will be over when I have communicated the news of her inheritance."

"Don't flatter yourself that they will be anything of the kind. She will then elect you her knight, and place herself under your protection to be conveyed to the States."

"Not if I know myself! [With energy.] Nothing would induce me to take charge of her for an hour."

"I am astonished at you," said Miss Chesney, laughing. "Your lack of a sense of duty, and of the opportunity opening before you, is most reprehensible. Fate has arranged things perfectly for you, if you would only take ad-

vantage of them. Here is this wild, beautiful creature, who has quarrelled with her lover, flung off the control of her guardians, and baffled the man who thought he had entrapped her, ready to pass into your hands, and you will have none of her! What can I say to rouse you to a sense of the possibilities of the situation?"

"I really think," he replied quietly, "that you have said enough to indicate certain things which there is no necessity to make plainer. There is no necessity, for example, to prove more conclusively than you have proved already that you do not consider me capable of filling any better rôle in life than that of a fortune-hunter. It is true "—he shrugged his shoulders—"that I have done nothing to deserve a very high opinion from you, that my life, so far, is a distinct failure, yet I am not aware that I have given you reason to regard me in quite such a despicable light as you evidently do."

She turned her head, to look at him with quick surprise. The pain and anger perceptible in his tone were also plainly to be read in his face. Evidently her careless words had carried a sting which she had been far from intending.

"Since when have you grown so obtuse that one cannot venture to jest with you?" she asked, still trying to speak lightly.

"There are jests which indicate things of deep earnestness," he answered. "From you—but why should I say what power to wound you possess. You know it well, and, like a true woman, use it remorselessly."

"Are you, too, jesting, or must I consider those words as 'of deep earnestness'?" she inquired. "I don't want to prove myself either obtuse or susceptible, but really that charge is very serious—if meant seriously."

"It is meant seriously," he replied. "You certainly cannot deny that you know your power, as far as I am concerned, and neither can you deny that you use it—"

"Remorselessly?" [as he paused].

"Yes, I must repeat the word, remorse-lessly."

There was a moment's silence. Then a perceptible chill—in fact, several degrees of frost

—crept into the atmosphere in the tone of Miss Chesney's next words.

"If the matter were of sufficient importance, I might ask you to be good enough to prove a charge which is not only serious but wholly undeserved," she said with crisp haughtiness. "I distinctly deny that I am aware of possessing any power as far as you are concerned, or of using it remorselessly. But one thing at least you have made plain to me, that if I am wise I will jest with you no more on the subject of the heiress, or indeed on any other subject. And I may also add the assurance that nothing is of less interest to me than the question whether you are or are not likely under any circumstances to become a fortune-hunter."

"I never imagined that the question interested you," he replied with undisguised bitterness. "But indifference is not an excuse for injustice."

"The injustice is on your side," she declared, with a flash of temper. "You have no right to make such charges against me. They are shamefully unjust, and—and very rude besides."

"For the last I humbly beg pardon," he responded in a tone as little humble as possible. "In future I will endeavour to avoid both injustice and rudeness by also carefully avoiding any personal discussion."

"It will certainly be best," she said, coldly. And indeed the conversation had now reached a point and taken a tone on both sides which seemed on the surface difficult to explain. As a general rule, two people do not pass in a moment from extreme friendliness to extreme exasperation unless there is some underlying cause for the last. But when such underlying causes exist they have a great power of forcing themselves into notice at the most unexpected times, and on the most trivial provocation. Something of the kind had now occurred here, to end the pleasant intercourse of these two old friends, to darken the idyllic beauty of the scene, and change their sense of delightful companionship into one of wounded bitterness.

It was a relief to both that the approach of Ramon at this moment ended their tête-à-tête, and for the rest of the evening each ignored

the other. It was only after Miss Chesney had finally withdrawn to her hammock within the hut that Leslie returned to seat himself again at the foot of the palm-tree where she had made, he thought, so charming a picture, and, while he smoked a pipe, not of peace, to gaze at the serene majesty of the great cordillera and meditate on the text that all men are fools, —especially when they chance to be in love.





CHAPTER XIV

ACROSS THE WIDOW'S PASS

THE little camp was astir at the first break of the beautiful tropical dawn the next morning. It had been decided, after much consultation the night before, that the servant should be left with Stanford, since the party could reach Sanchez before the next night, and would not therefore need the camping outfit which he carried. In order to accomplish this, however, an early start was necessary, with some rearrangement of saddles, so that each rider might carry his own special luggage and a small amount of food for a noonday meal.

In these arrangements Miss Chesney proved herself at once active and capable, her suggestions being excellent and her assistance energetic. Leslie, conscious of a change in her manner toward himself,—a certain stiffening and constraint, so slight that only a sensitive consciousness would have been aware of it—made no attempt to claim his place of the day before by her side, but, leaving that to Ramon, rode soberly behind with Mr. Chesney and Don Mariano.

Progress was soon resolved into a slow, laborious, upward climb in single file along trails to which the name of roads could be applied only in mockery. They were now in that narrow defile of the mountains which is the chief—almost the only—pass between the north and south sides of the island, and which is of the utmost strategic importance, since a mere handful of men could here successfully dispute the passage of an army. The path, if path it could be called, which they followed, lay along the sides of the great heights towering above them, covered with dense forest, while below one deep ravine after another opened its green, verdure-filled gulf. Higher and higher they climbed, up ascents so steep that it was necessary to clutch the manes, even to embrace the necks of the horses, to avoid

slipping backward; and it was only when they paused to rest the panting animals that they could take in the world of beauty lying around them on these vast, untrodden hills. Drenched with almost perpetual moisture from the clouds which the deep breast of the ocean sends to kiss their lofty summits, these majestic heights, the birthplaces of unnumbered streams, are covered with such wonders of tropic growth, such indescribable variety of trees, ferns, vines, and plants as might set a botanist wild. But to gasp out a few breathless ejaculations of admiration and delight was all that was possible in these brief halts, then to press forward again for the summit of the range, which lay still above them. Now and then white mists closed over their path, dissolving away presently in exquisite wreaths of vapour trailing through the green lacery of the tree-ferns, which are the loveliest of all the creations of Nature in these marvellous regions.

Finally, after a time devoted to this climbing toil, which seemed longer than it really was and yet was long enough to contain much possibility of fatigue, they gained the last height and stood upon the summit of the Sillón de la Viuda.

And then what a scene was before them! The great mountain heart of the island lay open to their gaze, a world of towering, beautiful forms, with the noble Yaqui peak looming majestically grand, yet soft and fair as a height of heaven, in the remote distance, while far below spread in its eternal beauty, its inexhaustible fertility, the Royal Plain of Columbus.

"Oh, wonderful, wonderful! How glad I am to be here!" was all Katherine Chesney could say, as her enraptured glance swept the vast picture. In the immediate foreground a sea of verdure covered the steep sides of the mountain shelving downward from the summit on which they stood, the magnificent fronds of palms and the wide satin leaves of wild plantains asserting themselves amid all the mass of mingled greenery. In many a waving line the great ridges trended away, falling in lesser hills down to the breadths of savanna that rolled to the yet more distant mountains which, robed in every shade of colour, from deepest violet

to faintest, most ethereal azure, receded into a hazy eternity, their highest summits hid away in sun-tinted masses of soft white clouds.

"It is a glorious picture," said Leslie, who found himself irresistibly attracted to Miss Chesney's side when the party halted. "I have seen many mountain views, but never before one so fine."

"It is like a dream of paradise," said she, sighing softly as from excess of pleasure. "Description can give no idea of it—at least the descriptions I have read did not prepare me for anything half so beautiful. But how is it "—she turned to Ramon—" that this is the Vega Real of Columbus, when we know that he gave that name to the country which he saw from the Monte Cristo Mountains, as he crossed over them from Isabella by the Puerto de los Hidalgos?"

The young man smiled. "You are very well acquainted with the history of Santo Domingo, señorita," he said. "The name which Columbus bestowed is applied to a much greater extent of country than he saw at the time he gave it, because the great plain which

so delighted his eyes is really a vast valley, or succession of valleys, lying between the two mountain ranges—this on which we stand and the Monte Cristo heights—and extending for a hundred and fifty miles through the heart of the island."

"If you had gathered your facts more attentively, you would know all that, Katherine," said Mr. Chesney, in a tone of rebuke. "But, as I have often told you, you think only of the romantic side of historical events. Your fancy was pleased with the picture of Columbus and his band of gentlemen breaking a way over the mountains, and of the great Discoverer giving a name to this truly royal plain, but you never thought to settle its geographical limits in your mind, or to consider that it might be different parts of the same valley which he saw from the *Puerto de los Hidalgos* and we see to-day from the *Sillón de la Viuda*."

"I suppose I must plead guilty again, papa, as I have pleaded guilty often before, to having more taste for the picturesque than the practical," Katherine answered, laughing. "But,

whether or not Columbus ever saw this part of his *Vega Real* no one can deny that he named it admirably. It is royally beautiful."

"And as fertile as it is beautiful," said Ramon. "In fact there are no limits to its fertility, but it is almost as much of a wilderness to-day as when Columbus discovered it."

"If one did not know it to be a fact, one would think it incredible," said Mr. Chesney, that here below us are thousands and thousands of leagues of land absolutely unsurpassed in capability of production, yet almost entirely given over to wild, uncultivated nature. I doubt if there is a parallel for such neglected opportunities in any other part of the world."

"Again, it is necessary to remember the terrible history of the island in order to understand it," said his daughter.

Mr. Chesney shrugged his shoulders. "Even that history is no excuse for it," he observed. "But we may be sure of one thing, that what Santo Domingo is, Cuba will become if she is so unfortunate as to be given, like this unhappy island, into the hands of an incapable hybrid population.—But we cannot

remain here all day admiring the view. Where do we go from here?"

Don Mariano, to whom the question was addressed, divined its meaning and pointed northward where, in the midst of blue, hazy distance, one point glittered like a jewel in the sunshine. "Samaná," he said, briefly.

"So yonder is the bay of Samaná," said Mr. Chesney, following the gesture with his glance. "We are much nearer to it than I imagined. But can we hope to reach it to-day?"

"Not to-day," Ramon answered. "Don Mariano expects to go to-day to the *estancia* of a man named Severino Garcia, whom he once employed, and where he has little doubt that Felisa has made her way."

"Vamonos!" cried Don Mariano, waving his hand and riding forward. And, with a last glance over the far-stretching prospect, the party followed him.

Perhaps it was the indescribable beauty of their surroundings, or the equally indescribable badness of the road, which caused Miss Chesney and Leslie to resume their relations of comradeship as they descended the Cordillera. Certainly both were potent reasons. At one moment they were pointing out to each other the green gulfs opening below their path, filled with tropical foliage and the white spray of falling waters; the next Leslie was on foot and, despite Miss Chesney's protests, leading her horse over some spot where a single misstep would have sent horse and rider crashing down to destruction, hundreds of feet below.

And, although less dangerous, the road was scarcely better when, the descent of the mountain having been accomplished, they found themselves in the valley. Their way still lay through forest, wild, green, marvellous in its beauty, but the narrow path they followed was little better than a quagmire. Floundering and splashing through deep mud, their progress was slow, until presently they emerged from the forest to a wide, grassy plain, set with royal palms and bounded by the mighty hills. Here a sweeping gallop enabled them to cover some distance in a satisfactory manner, and brought Miss Chesney and Leslie into still more renewed sympathy, for each was

conscious of a sense of delightful companionship in the enjoyment of these fair scenes, where they almost fancied themselves explorers and discoverers of a virgin land.

It was an ideal spot where they presently halted for their noon refreshment, on the bank of a crystal stream which came pouring over mossy rocks, under the overarching shade of luxuriant verdure, and where flowering vines climbed, and orchids of the most exquisite varieties bloomed in the green obscurity. Again Miss Chesney uttered a sigh expressive of a pleasure so intense as to be almost akin to pain.

"It is really too enchanting!" she said to Leslie, as they sat side by side in this wonderful retreat. "Nature overwhelms us with more than we can possibly appreciate or enjoy. But I shall never forget these fairy places, and I owe Felisa a debt of gratitude for having led us into them."

"We certainly owe her a great deal," Leslie agreed with perfect sincerity. "For myself, I confess that I could with pleasure go on chasing her indefinitely. My only fear now is

that she will permit herself to be run to earth too soon."

"I am afraid papa's patience would not hold out if the chase were very much prolonged," said Miss Chesney, doubtfully, "else I should hope that she would keep on flitting before us like a will-o'-the-wisp until—well, at least until we had explored the *Vega Real* from end to end."

"Why not do that anyway? There is a railroad from Sanchez, at the head of Samaná Bay, to La Vega, and when we have found and disposed of our vagrant heiress we might make an agreeable little journey to the latter place. You know so much more about the island than I do that I need not tell you what La Vega is."

"Oh, I know perfectly well," she replied.

"It is one of the most interesting places in the island, near the site of the old city of Concepçion de la Vega, where Columbus erected a fort, and the Santo Cerro, or Holy Hill, where a miracle occurred at the time of the invasion. Yes, I should like very much to go there. We must endeavour to persuade papa to do so.

Anything ought to seem easy after we have crossed the great mountain-range which is the backbone of the island. But will our chase, do you think, lead us as far as Sanchez?"

"We are very near Sanchez now, and in any event it will be well to go there.—But—hallo! who on earth is this?"

Miss Chesney looked around, and saw a man who, riding one horse and leading another, drew up on the opposite bank of the stream for an instant, then with evident recognition splashed eagerly across it.

"Don Mariano!" exclaimed the newcomer.
"Severino!" ejaculated Don Mariano. And
then burst forth a torrent of words from both,
into which Ramon Herresdorf flung himself, as
it were, with an excited interest which made
Leslie say:

"That fellow must have news of Felisa."

"He has," Katherine answered. "I hear her name mentioned, but they speak so fast I can understand very little of what they say. I think, however, that he has seen her."

"No wonder you cannot understand them," said Leslie, disgustedly. "Did anyone ever

hear such a flood of talk? Why can't they talk with some kind of moderation!"

"I believe," said Miss Chesney, after a moment or two of further listening, "that he is taking Mr. Stanford's horse back to him."

"Indeed! The fair Felisa, then, absolutely considered what was to become of the man—in case he survived her attack. One begins to have hopes of her."

"Here is one who has seen Felisa, señorita," said Ramon, suddenly coming up to them. His face was all aglow with excitement, his dark eyes shone. "This man, who is a very good and honest man, formerly worked for Don Mariano, but now lives on his own land across the mountains. To his house Felisa went last night, and she induced him to start early this morning to cross the pass and see after the man she had left. That is his horse he is taking to him."

"I understood as much," said Miss Chesney. "And where is Felisa?—at this man's house?"

"Alas, no. She left at the same time as he did, and has gone to Samaná, where she has

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some friends. It will be necessary to seek her there."

- "At least it is well to know definitely where she is, and not to have to wander over the country inquiring for her," Leslie remarked.
- "Yes," Ramon agreed, "that is well. And it is also very well to know that she is safe, and that the wife of this man, Severino Garcia, is accompanying her. And Don Mariano is acquainted with the people to whom she goes, —humble people, but good."
- "So much the better," said Leslie. "When the transformation scene occurs and Cinderella is changed once for all into a princess, we want the setting of the scene to be as effective as possible. The humble but good people little guess what an angel they are entertaining unawares."
- "They would treat her no better if they did, señor," said Ramon, a little proudly.
- "I have no doubt of that," replied Leslie, kindly. "And if she has any wisdom, this Felisa of yours, she will value above all her gold these hearts which have given her what

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she can never in her life be sure of again,—faithful and disinterested affection."

The young man looked at him a little wistfully. "It seems to me," he said, "that the first person whom this money is to test is Felisa herself,—to prove how much or how little she values the affection of which you speak."





CHAPTER XV

ON THE SHORES OF SAMANÁ

T is impossible for imagination to conceive anything more idyllic in beauty than the shores of Samaná Bay. No one who has ever rounded the majestic granite mass of Balandra Head and sailed up the shining waters of this magnificent gulf, the finest in America, can forget the enchanting pictures which the long line of coast presents, from the great Morne Diablo, with its terraced sea-front of red cliff, at the base of which the waves eternally break, and its forest-clad height receding into the clouds, to where the peninsula ends at the Gran Estero. Perhaps the loveliest of these pictures is the beautiful harbour of Samaná proper, or Santa Barbara, guarded by its fairy islets,—masses of rock covered with richest, most luxuriant verdure, rising out of and reflected in the crystal water; but the entire coast for thirty miles presents a constant succession of bold green hills, covered to their summits with tropical foliage, sloping down into charming valleys, and to exquisite bights indented in the shore—miniature bays where the rippling waves flash softly on crescents of glistening white sand, fringed by royal palms. "It is Paradise found again!" cried Columbus, when he first looked on this entrancing beauty; and no one can look on it to-day, unchanged as it is in any essential respect, without echoing the cry.

But on the opposite side of the bay the scenery is somewhat different in character. The traveller from the deck of his steamer, gazing across leagues of shimmering water, sees only a blue, misty shore—evidently a vast level expanse—backed by far, faint, dreamlike hills. This is Savana de la Mar, a wide, beautiful plain, abundantly watered by many streams, and susceptible of the highest cultivation. Its shore is also indented with the fairy-like bays which form so charming a feature of the opposite coast, and it was beside the curv-

ing beach of one of these that an insignificant palm-thatched dwelling stood, amid surroundings which an emperor might envy for his palace. A group of magnificent palms lifted their crowns of drooping fronds into the air a hundred feet above its roof; behind, a grove of luxuriant bananas rustled their immense green satin leaves, and in front the blue-and-silver waters stretched to the remote distance of the opposite shore, where the long range of hills swam in a haze of aërial azure. Everything that Nature could bestow of beauty, perfection of climate, and productiveness of soil was here; and if those whom these conditions surrounded were not happy, one can only say that no surroundings, however ideal, can insure happiness.

This somewhat trite truth was very plainly written on the face of a girl who, leaving the house on the day after the pursuing party had crossed the Sillón de la Viuda, strolled, with the aimlessness of one who has no particular object in view, around the crescent of the shining beach, and, reaching its farthest point, sat herself down in the shade of some cluster-

ing trees, and gazed with unseeing eyes over the leagues of glittering, dancing water which lay before her. It was the same face that Miss Chesney and Leslie had seen in the cathedral of Santo Domingo, yet in expression and aspect so changed that it might almost have been doubted whether it was the same. A few days only had elapsed since its stormy beauty struck them so much; but what was written on it now was the deep, possibly ineffaceable trace of storm which had passed, leaving behind regret as passionate as the rage had been.

In truth, Felisa was tasting for the first time in her life that bitter potion called shame,—a shame, which made her wish to hide herself from all her world, which had caused her to take refuge in this obscure spot, and made her now long to go a step farther and bury herself, her troublesome passions and her terrible mistake (for so it seemed to her), in the waters before her. For who would ever believe with what childish ignorance and faith she had trusted herself to the man who talked of having been her father's friend and promised

to help her to independence in her father's country? In the horror with which the few faithful friends to whom she had told her story had received it, in their evident opinion that she had hopelessly ruined her life, she seemed to read her fate. Nothing remained for her now but to hide herself far from all those who had known her, and be thankful if anyone would receive or believe in her. As for Ramon, —with a despairing heart she told herself that she must never think of Ramon again. If his father had objected to her before, what would he say of her now? And Ramon himself,—was it likely that he would ever forgive or condone such an act as that of which she had been guilty? In the hopelessness which filled her in reply to this question, she learned a truth as old as time, that what we possess with certainty we are likely to hold but lightly, and that loss is the sad teacher which must prove its value to us. Facing the conviction that by her own act she had lost her lover, and recalling, as at such moments unsparing memory does recall, all the faithful devotion of years which she had so poorly requited, Felisa felt

as if her heart would break. Intense in sorrow as in every other emotion, her dark eyes were full of a passionate despair, as she gazed out over the sunlit waters and asked herself what was left for her in life. A fierce indifference to the fate of the man she had wounded possessed her, but she was nevertheless aware that if he died she would be accounted a murderess. Just now that was a matter of importance to her only so far as it deepened the gloom of her future isolation. Who would ever again regard the heroine of such a tragedy—a tragedy caused by her own folly and passion—with any sentiment save perhaps a pitying aversion?

And it was while she thus sank deeper and deeper into wholesome repentance and humility that a change, more wonderful than imagination could have dreamed of, was drawing near to her. She had purposely turned her back upon the house when she took her seat, and, since she was some distance removed from it, no sound came thence to her ear. She was therefore still gazing in deep despondency over the glorious beauty of the outspread scene, when a step on the firm white sand of the beach

made her start and turn her head. The next moment she sprang to her feet with a low cry. Ramon was approaching her.

It is not likely that Ramon, when he claimed the right, very readily yielded to him by the party which had just arrived, of going to seek Felisa, formed to himself any definite idea or conjecture of what reception he might expect, or what her mood would be. But, had he done so, he certainly could never have anticipated what took place. He had been thinking of the Felisa whom he had seen last, from whom he had parted at the cathedral door; but this was a different Felisa altogether, this girl with her pale face and tragic eyes, who looked at him for a moment as if she could not believe the testimony of her sight, and then rushed forward and flung herself into his arms, as if into a shelter and refuge.

"Ramon! Oh, Ramon!" she cried, with all her passionate soul in her voice. "Can it be that you forgive me and love me still?"

Ramon was figuratively knocked down; but physically he stood firm, and Felisa knew by the willing ardour of the arms which encircled her what was in his heart before his lips uttered it.

"I can never cease to love you, Felisa, as long as I live," he answered; "and to serve you I would go to the world's end—though you did not believe it when we parted last."

"I was a wretch, a miserable wretch!" said Felisa. "But I have been terribly punished. A little while ago my heart was broken. I never thought that you would look at me again. Maria Garcia said that I had been so mad that no one would ever believe in me or care for me again."

"Maria Garcia is a fool," replied Ramon, with angry emphasis. "It is true that you have been wild, and angry without cause, and foolish——"

"Oh, Ramon, worse than foolish! See!—
you must not make light of what I have done.
I am overwhelmed with shame when I think
of it, and I deserve anything—everything, except that you take away your love. For I was
mad, I think, and I acted like a mad creature.
That man—but tell me if you know what I did
to him?"

"Oh, Ramon! and if he dies?"

"He will not die; but if he did, it would be no more than he deserves, for he knew well what he was doing when he took you away from your home."

"Yes, he knew; no doubt he knew. But I suppose he did not believe me to be the fool I was, and thought I knew also. That is what Maria Garcia says. It is right to remember that—and also that I asked him to take me."

"You asked him, Felisa?"

"I think so. At least I asked him if I could not do something for myself if I were in my father's country, and he said, yes, there were many things that even a young girl could do there; and I said I would give much to go, and he said he would take me; that we could embark on a ship at Sanchez, and I—I trusted him and believed that he meant only to help me, and I was like one on fire with rage because nobody else would help me, and I thought I would show you what I could do, and—and—"

"My poor Felisa,"-very tenderly, as the

voice broke down in strangled sobs,—" tell me no more. There is no need. I know all, and I have never for one instant thought evil of you—never."

"Ah, but I must tell you. It is only from me you can know all," Felisa insisted, choking back her sobs and looking up at him with beautiful, tear-drenched eyes. "And I will speak to you as if you were the Blessed Mother herself. This is how it was. After we had started, I began to have a dim fear that I had done wrong, because I liked not the way he looked at me and spoke to me. He seemed trying to behave as if he were my lover, and he had not behaved in that way before we started. He knew it was a false pretence, and I showed that I was displeased. It was then that I made up my mind that I would go no farther with him than across the Sillón de la Viuda, that when we reached the house of Severino Garcia I would remain there. But when we halted to rest the horses and take some food at the foot of the pass, he did not want to go on. I said that we must, and that, if he refused to go, I would go alone. Then

he said he would go if I would kiss him. I told him that I would see him dead first, and that if he touched me I would kill him. He laughed at that, and called me a 'spitfire,' and caught hold of me. I said, 'Let me go, or I will kill you!' He laughed again, and kissed me. Then I struck him with this "-she drew with a quick motion from the folds of her dress a small, keen dagger-" and I know I tried to kill him. I felt no pity for him when he staggered back-none. I was furious, and I believe that I would have struck him again, but that my whole mind was set on escape. I ran out, called Manuel—the boy, you know to come with me, made him mount, and we rode off. That is-all."

Her voice dropped over the last words, and she closed her eyes as if she were going to faint, as her head sank on his shoulder. The long strain of intense emotion, never relaxed from the hour of which she spoke until now, had at last its moment of reaction. She felt herself suddenly weak as a child, and for a moment she lost consciousness. But only for a moment. Her splendid young vitality soon

asserted itself. She opened her eyes again with a blissful sense of peace and security, and of a weight lifted away forever as she felt Ramon's kisses on her face.

"You are very, very good to forgive me," she murmured. "I am glad now I did not kill him; it would make things worse. And as it is, how will your father ever overlook this?"

A sudden thought—the first since she had rushed to meet him—of her changed condition, of the great news which awaited her, came to Ramon at these words. His arms dropped away from her under the impulse of it, and she, misunderstanding the cause of this withdrawal, looked up at him, a picture of penitent sadness.

"You think he will never overlook it," she said. "And it is I who have made another barrier between us."

"Felisa," cried Ramon, almost beside himself with conflicting emotions, "do not tempt me to say another word. I should never forgive myself if I bound you by a promise of any kind before you know—but come with me to the house: there are—some people waiting to see you." "People?" she shrank in painful surprise. "Who are they, and why do they wish to see me? Ramon, are you deceiving me? Is that man perhaps dead, and have they come to arrest me?"

"No, no!" cried Ramon, vehemently. "How can you think such a thing? The people yonder are Don Mariano—"

"Ah!" she ejaculated, shrinking a little.

"And an American gentleman, who has come from the States to find you and bring you news."

"To find me, Ramon?"

"You, Felisa—no one else. But it is not my place to give his news. He will tell you himself what it is. Come with me."

Keeping her hand close clasped in his, he drew her forward, walking hurriedly, as if he feared his own resolution if they tarried. And so Felisa, bewildered and breathless, was drawn a few minutes later into the presence of the group who were seated in the humble Dominican house awaiting her.

It was surely a strange place in which to seek the heiress of millions. This had been the thought of Miss Chesney and Leslie as they gazed around the apartment in which they found themselves while waiting the coming of the Cinderella who was to be transformed. Poverty could hardly have found more complete expression than in this house of logs, with its floor of earth and roof of thatch; but perhaps it was owing to the idyllic surroundings that there seemed something idyllic in the simplicity of the habitation. It was as if where Nature gave so much, and where she was herself so alluring, man needed but little in the form of shelter, and that little as simple, as primitive, as possible. Nor were the manners of the people at variance with this idea. No Arab chief at the door of his tent (and that is saying more than if one said a prince at the gate of his palace) could have surpassed in dignity and grace the manner and bearing of the owner of this humble hut as he received his unexpected guests and led them within, where his wife with equal courtesy made them welcome and offered them such seats as the habitation afforded.

A few words had explained their business—

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which indeed the presence of Don Mariano sufficiently explained—and while Ramon went in the direction indicated by one of the children to seek Felisa, the heads of the household, together with a tall, bronze-coloured woman who was Maria Garcia, eagerly addressed themselves to Don Mariano, relating the manner of Felisa's arrival and her story. Don Mariano endeavoured to wave these explanations aside. "I know, I know," he repeated, as they poured forth their account, and as soon as it was possible to stem the torrent of words, he on his part began to speak. He thanked them first, warmly and gratefully, for receiving and sheltering the girl who had so wildly left her home and so fortunately escaped out of the hands of a schemer; and then he proceeded to electrify them by telling them why she had been the object of the defeated scheme, what wonderful change had come over her fortunes and made her a prize worth running any risk to gain. Their surprise was great, and their pleasure evidently sincere. But to Leslie, who, from understanding little of what was said, was the more closely observant of manner, it seemed that the first of these sentiments was not so intense as it would have been where cupidity was more of a recognised force in life, and that the last was untinctured with the envy which almost invariably accompanies the reception of such news in more highly civilised localities and circles. They were still laughing at the discomfiture of the wounded adventurer, when in the open doorway Ramon appeared, leading Felisa.

Silence fell at once, for everyone perceived by the pale resolution of one young face, and the startled apprehension of the other, that the time for congratulations had not yet come. Evidently the heiress was still in ignorance of her good-fortune, and evidently, also, she was expecting anything rather than such tidings. She hardly noticed the strangers—save that a momentary amazement was in her glance when it fell on Miss Chesney—as she entered and advanced, with the air of a child who comes to beg pardon for a fault, toward Don Mariano. But the hesitating words with which she began to address him were (to her) most unexpectedly cut short by his meeting her with a warmth

strange to their intercourse hitherto, and eagerly embracing her. Nor, let it in justice be said, was this warmth simulated on his part. It was a sincere expression of his pleasure in seeing again the wilful but still lovable girl who had grown up under his roof and whom such a golden halo now encircled. It is impossible to deny that but for this halo his reception of her would have been different. But it is also certain that he would have been glad of her recovery had it only meant that she would return to be a charge upon him as in the past.

"Ah, Felisa," he said, "thou hast behaved very badly, and with an incredible folly, but I will not scold thee. I am too thankful to see thee safe, preserved by God and thy own courage from a great danger."

The sincere feeling of the words touched the girl, who knew herself little deserving of such kindness. She took his hand and kissed it with a gesture as graceful as it was humble.

"I am sorry," she said, "very sorry to have given you so much trouble, both now and in the past. I will try to make amends if—if I may go home."

"We have come to take thee home," replied Don Mariano, delighted with this unexpected docility. "But first we have news, strange news, for thee, carita. Here"—he turned toward Leslie—" is a señor Americano who reached Rosario with this news the very day thou, wilful one, hadst left; and he has followed thee through the forest and over the mountains to tell it."

Leslie could not but smile as he felt how every glance in the company now turned upon him, as the magician whose wand was to make the mighty change in the girl whose grave eyes looked at him expectantly.

"I believe," he said, "that Miss Ancram understands English: so I will not apologise for the fact that my news must be communicated in that language. I have to tell you," he went on, directly addressing the girl, "that you have inherited from a grand-uncle, of whom probably you have never heard, a very large fortune."

She stared at him a moment, so amazed and apparently so uncomprehending that he was about to address Ramon, who had drawn aside,

and ask him to repeat the communication in Spanish, when she spoke—in English also, but with a strong foreign accent:

"Did I understand you right, señor? Do you say that I - Felisa - have inherited a fortune?"

He bowed. "You understand me perfectly. That is what I have said."

"It is, you say, a very large fortune? I— I am rich?"

"You are very rich, señorita. There are few women in the world more rich in their own right than you."

She was silent again for a moment, her great dark eyes still fixed upon him, her entire expression that of one who is taking in an idea so new and so overwhelming that readjustment of the whole mental attitude is necessary in order to comprehend it. No one spoke. Even Don Mariano remained by some instinct silent, and waited curiously for her next words—the most self-revealing words that she would ever speak.

They came at last, slowly, uttered as if in a dream. "Then, if I am rich, everything is changed. Instead of being a weight, a burden,

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I can help others—those who have so long cared for me. And—and—perhaps——''

She suddenly turned. A flash of light came over her face, irradiating, transforming it. At that moment she was divinely beautiful. Her lips curved into an exquisite smile, her eyes glowed with radiance as they fell upon Ramon. For the instant she seemed to forget every presence but his, as, advancing toward him with her hand outstretched, she went on with infinite simplicity and sweetness:

"Perhaps if this is really so—if I am really rich—your father will overlook the foolish thing which I have done, and let us be happy."





CHAPTER XVI

THE END OF THE CHASE

"AND so Felisa has justified my good opinion of her, and proved herself as generous and disinterested as the most romantic heart could desire."

It was Miss Chesney who made this remark, an hour later, when Leslie and herself had strolled to the point of the crescent-shaped beach where Felisa had sat in mournful despair so short a time before. It was settled that they would return to Sanchez—where they had spent the last night—taking the young heiress with them. But their hospitable hosts insisted on their waiting for a collation which was now in process of preparation; and in the interval these two had walked out together. As they sat down under the clustering

group of palms which shaded the point, with the wondrous expanse of water and sky and distant shore spread before it, Leslie smiled in answer to his companion's last remark.

"I am glad that Felisa has justified your good opinion," he said, "but I am afraid it is my turn now to be a little cynical. She is too ignorant as yet to understand the power of her wealth. When she does understand it—"

"The knowledge will have a good effect upon her," said Miss Chesney, as he paused. "How do I know that? Oh, by an instinctive judgment of her character, at which you may sneer—"

"I have not the least intention of doing any such thing," interposed Leslie. "When have I ever ventured to sneer at any opinion of yours, whether based on instinct or not?"

"You would if you dared, however. It is an invariable habit of men to sneer at any opinion based on instinct, without regard to the fact that their own opinions are frequently based on nothing half so trustworthy. However, to return to Felisa. I am sure that she will now develop into a noble woman, and that

her use of this wealth will be as good as its effect upon her."

"But—pardon an humble inquirer into processes of thought which are shrouded in mystery to his duller understanding—why do you think so?"

"Well [condescendingly], I will tell you, though I do not imagine that I shall convince you. Her faults heretofore have all sprung from qualities—or, as the French say, the defects of qualities—noble in themselves. It is surely not a new or strange idea to you that a nature, especially if it has strongly marked characteristics, will be totally different in an environment which frets and jars upon it, than in one which is sympathetic and harmonious."

"I would not have to seek very long for that knowledge. I am a totally different man when I am treated with respect, consideration, and sympathy, than when I am—let us say snubbed."

"Then you can appreciate the truth of what I state. Applying it to Felisa, one may readily see how her pride and spirit of independence have been galled by her dependent position;

how her temper has suffered from uncongenial surroundings and the apparent hopelessness of her fate; and how her courage scorned what seemed to her the cowardly submission of her lover to his father."

"What a splendid devil's advocate you would make!" observed Leslie, admiringly.

"But now," pursued the speaker, unheeding this interruption, "we have had an opportunity to see the fine qualities which prosperity has already developed. Could anything have been more generous than her first thoughts when she heard that she was rich beyond the dreams of avarice, or anything more noble, more self-forgetful, than her first words to Ramon? Oh, I am sure she has a nature which will ripen and sweeten in sunshine, like those grapes from which is expressed the finest wine."

"Your theory of the excellent effects of prosperity is one which would meet with wide acceptance," said Leslie, smiling. "But I suppose I hardly need point out to you that it is not that which has the approbation of moralists. One of these last would hold that

such wealth as this girl possesses will probably have a bad rather than a good effect upon her character."

"My theory," said Miss Chesney, incisively, "is that upon the character itself depends the influence which wealth exercises. If the mercenary taint is in it, the vulgar love of money for its own sake, if vanity rules or selfishness dominates, then the deterioration of such a character will be quick and complete. But if it be generous in instinct, noble in quality, and high in tastes, wealth can do it no harm, but only good, let all the moralists in the world say what they will to the contrary."

"Amen. I wish I had at this moment a fortune to lay at your feet."

"You have no assurance that I am one of those on whom its effects would be good. I am afraid, on the contrary, that I should become too fond of power, if I had the power which a great fortune gives. I am aware that I am already too much inclined to be dictatorial."

"Now, I call it very remarkable," said Leslie, who was diligently digging a hole in the sand, "that you should be so well aware of your weak point. I wish I had as clear ideas about my own."

"I should not think you could be in any doubt about it," observed Miss Chesney, dryly.

"Don't you?" he replied, quite eagerly.

"But I am in doubt, so pray enlighten me.

Tell me what it is."

"Really, Mr. Leslie, I don't see that I am called upon to be your Mentor—"

"Called upon—no; but as an act of charity. You think me a failure in life, that I know; and I am prepared to admit that you are right. But why, in your opinion, am I a failure?"

"Does n't it strike you that such—er—personal conversation is in bad taste?"

"Not at all. I confess to liking personal conversation. It is much more interesting than the discussion of abstract subjects. I want to talk about the concrete—the very concrete,—about myself. What, I repeat, is in your opinion the cause of my double failure, either to do anything worth doing in life, or to win your regard—I may say your respect?"

"You have no right to say anything of the

kind," she returned, indignantly. "When have I ever indicated—"

"That you despise me? I regret to be forced to answer, many times. Lately, in particular, when you have told me again and again that my manifest duty was to marry, or endeavour to marry, a woman for her money. Now, when I consider the type of man who is supposed to be specially fitted for that destiny, I cannot fail to believe that you hold me very low indeed, or you would not have offered such advice; but, not knowing in the least what I have done to merit your contempt, I humbly beg for light on the subject."

He was so intently engaged in digging his hole—as if he had been digging for the light he asked—that he did not glance at Miss Chesney as he uttered this speech. Had he done so, he would have been struck by the expression of her face. As it was, he only caught the tone of her voice as she said, after a moment's hesitation,

"I should never have thought you would be so foolish as to ask for the serious interpretation of a jest." "A jest?" he repeated, and now he suspended his work of excavation to look up at her. "Your advising me to secure Felisa's fortune might have been a jest, but not the contempt which made that advice possible."

"No," she replied, "that was not a jest, for the simple reason that even a jest must have an existence, and my contempt for you has never had any existence at all except in your imagination."

"You know that you think me indolent, careless, lacking in energy—"

"Oh, yes [impatiently], you are all of that. Did I not say you had no need to have your weak points told to you? But have those faults ever injured anyone save yourself? And one does not—exactly—despise a man for only injuring himself."

"You are mistaken [gloomily]. I think you have despised me, although you are kindly endeavouring to smooth it over now."

"I am glad that at least you give me credit for so much charitable intention," said she, smiling. "The other evening you were quite certain that I intended to insult you, and that I used 'remorselessly' my power to wound you."

"I behaved like a brute on the occasion you mention," he replied, contritely, "and I have been wearing sackcloth and ashes ever since. I beg you to pardon me, and to believe that I was really not accountable for my words. When a man is deeply stung and wounded, he does not always know what he says."

Miss Chesney regarded him for a moment in silence. He was still digging his hole in very energetic fashion, and did not meet her gaze. One would have said that he was preparing a grave for something in the Dominican sand.

"But," she said after a moment—and her voice was very gentle—" why should you have been stung and wounded? You are not usually so dull in understanding—jests."

"I suppose," he replied, "that it all depends on who jests. And then, as I told you at the time and repeated a moment ago, it was not the jest, but the underlying contempt which made the jest possible, that stung me."

"And how often must I repeat that there was no underlying contempt?"

He shrugged his shoulders slightly. "You think so, perhaps, and I am grateful to you for trying to think so, for trying to convince yourself and me that there was not. But the fact remains that you gave me the advice which you did because of your conviction that I was a poor, incapable creature, manifestly intended by destiny to marry a rich woman because I had done and could do nothing else in the world."

Miss Chesney sighed profoundly. "What a perilous thing is jesting!" she said, sententiously. "And how careful one should be how and with whom one jests! If I had for a moment suspected you of being so susceptible, I may say so dense—"

"Pray don't hesitate to express your meaning plainly," said he, laughing a little. "I am not too dense to comprehend what it is."

She made a gesture, as if dismissing the subject. "Instead of comprehending, you are determined to misunderstand me," she said, "so we will not discuss the subject further. And, after all, this scene is too suggestive of everything most exquisitely peaceful for

quarrelling. We shall have time enough for that amusement on our journey to La Vega and Santiago."

"Have you spoken to your father about such a trip? Will he consent to go?"

"At present he says that the project is absurd and not to be thought of; that he had no anticipation of further unreasonable proposals when he consented to come here. But I have lodged the idea in his mind; the fascination of it will grow upon him; and finally he will observe that, being so near those places, it will really never do to leave the island without having seen them. In order to bring him to that point it is only necessary to wait—and say nothing more."

"How well you understand managing him!" remarked Leslie, admiringly.

"It would be strange if I had not learned so much as that in the years we have lived together, and not only lived but travelled together. For it is a trite but true saying that nothing reveals character so much as travelling. You don't know your nearest relative or most intimate friend until you have

made a journey with him. Now papa and I have been around the globe, so I am very well acquainted with all his little ways, especially in regard to sight-seeing."

"If I could have the pleasure of travelling around the globe with you, perhaps we should learn to understand each other better," said Leslie, in a wistful tone.

"It is barely possible that after such a journey you might be able to comprehend when I was jesting," she returned, dryly; "but the result would hardly warrant the experiment."

"Not for you," he assented. "As for me, I am afraid that I understand you too well already, and that even the journey to La Vega will but serve to deepen a knowledge which causes more pain than pleasure."

"How extremely flattering you are!"

"Flattering!" He looked up at her quickly.
"When have I ever thought of flattering you?
I have always tried to speak the truth plainly and directly, even when it was not a truth which you cared to hear. I know well that you prefer to keep our intercourse on the surface, to avoid the expression of feelings which

you do not wish to recognise, to veil unpleasant opinions under jests——"

"Oh, how you harp on one string!" cried she, impatiently. "There you are striking at my poor little jests again!"

"Because your poor little jests struck very deep with me. But I will not allude to them again. I will speak as frankly as I have always done, and tell you that I am considering whether I shall not take the steamer for the States, which is due at Sanchez to-morrow, instead of returning with our party to Santo Domingo."

She started. "Are you thinking of forsaking us in such a manner?" she asked, reproachfully. "And the trip to La Vega!—I fancied you would enjoy it as much as I."

"It would be a greater pleasure than I can express," he answered. "But there are pleasures which, if a man is wise, he will shun. I thought that I might approach and warm myself a little at a flame which had burned me once, but I find that the old burn grows too painful. My metaphors are perhaps obscure, but the plain truth is—for I would not have you think me churlish—that I find that I love

you as much as ever—as ever, do I say?" breaking off almost fiercely. "No, far more than I ever loved you before, as if, unknown to myself, my love had been growing in the interval since you laughed at me and refused to listen to me a year ago. And, this being so, should I not be a fool if I lingered near you, only to be wounded by your indifference, your scorn—"

"No!" The word in its sharp energy cut the air like a sword. She turned toward him with a flash of fire in her grey eyes, a sudden rush of colour into her lily-pale cheeks. "You have no right to say that," she went on, breathlessly. "I have never scorned you, —never! And if I laughed, does one not sometimes laugh at that which one—likes? Last year—Oh, what fools men are!"

Her voice choked over the last vehement exclamation. She looked away again, but now she saw the shining waters and the distant shore swimming in a mist of tears. Leslie, startled beyond measure by her words, forgot his grave-digging, and leaning forward, tried to see her face.

"No doubt we are fools," he said humbly; but last year—how was I specially a fool last year? Did you not send me away?—refuse to listen to me?"

"I—laughed at you. But was that a reason for believing—?" She turned her face suddenly and looked at him. He would have been a fool indeed had he not read then what was shining in her eyes.

"I never meant you to go; I never thought you would not come back," she went on. "When you did not come, I believed it had been a mere fancy which had passed—"

"A fancy!" He took her hand and kissed it passionately. "No, it was no fancy, but a love which has grown greater with time and absence, until now it has passed beyond my control, so that one of two things I must do, —either part from you finally, or never part again. It is for you to say which it shall be."

She did not laugh at him now, nor mock his earnestness in her light, accustomed fashion, but answered sweetly, gravely, and directly,

"We will never part."

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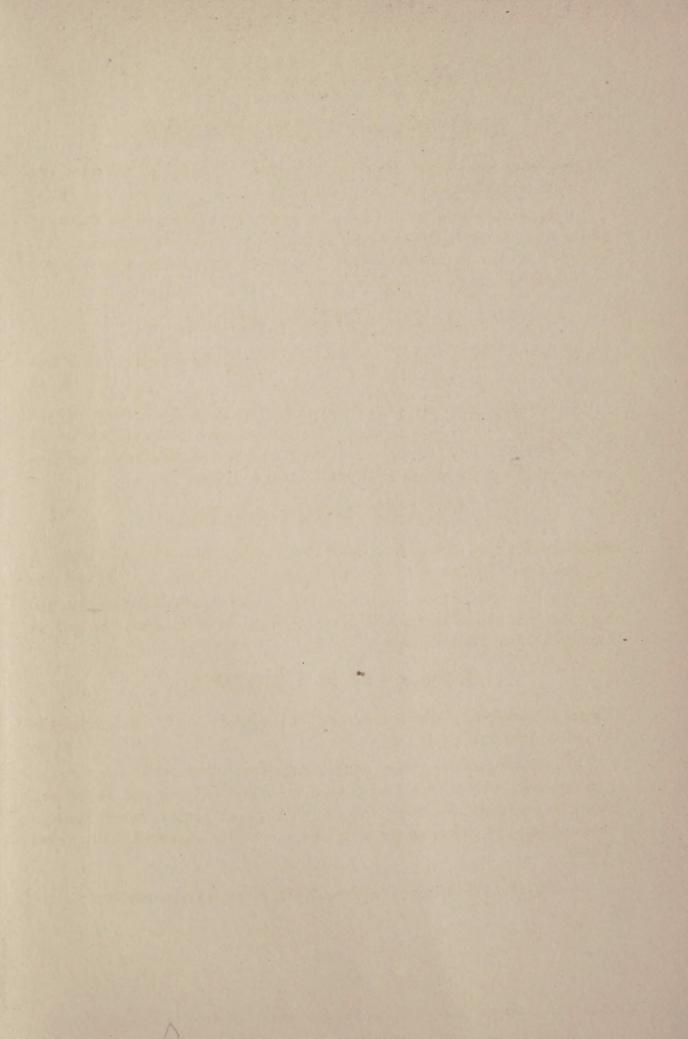
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